Living a Spiritual Life:
5. Overcoming the Ego

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Module Objective

- You will understand some of the challenges in overcoming your ego to become your true self and attain spirituality.
This module is on overcoming the ego to attain spirituality

- The major challenge in becoming spiritual is overcoming our lower nature, desires and ego, which is our worldly sense of self. Identifying with our ego keeps us ignorant of our true nature and from becoming our true self.
What is the ego?

- The ego is the animal in us, the heritage of the flesh which is full of selfish desires. (Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi 1/8/49)
How can we subdue our egos?

- By obeying the laws of God, seeking to live the life laid down in our teachings, and prayer and struggle, we can subdue our egos. We call people "saints" who have achieved the highest degree of mastery over their ego. (Letter on behalf of Shoghi Effendi 1/8/49)
From the previous two slides answer these questions.

1. What is the ego?

2. How can we subdue the ego?
Answers these questions.

1. What is the ego? The animal in us, the heritage of the flesh which is full of selfish desires.

2. How can we subdue the ego? By obeying the laws of God, seeking to live the life laid down in our teachings, and prayer and struggle.
Who are saints?

1.
Who are saints?

1. people who have achieved the highest degree of mastery over their ego.
What two meanings does self have?

1. the identity of the individual created by God.... mentioned in such passages as, "he hath known God who hath know himself“ etc.

2. the ego, the dark, animalistic heritage each one of us has, the lower nature that can develop into a monster of selfishness, brutality, lust and so on. It is this self we must struggle against, or this side of our natures, in order to strengthen and free the spirit within us and help it to attain perfection . . . .” (On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 12/10/47)
What are some allusions to the ego?

- Your concern about the overemphasis upon the self and ego echoes a central theme of the Manifestation Himself, and it is the subject of many allusions in His Writings wherein, for example, He speaks of "the evil of egotism" and of those who are "captives of egotism." The Master refers to "the rust of egotism" and tells of "... the subtlety of the ego of man. It is the Tempter (the subtle serpent of the mind) and the poor soul not entirely emancipated from its suggestions is deceived until entirely severed from all save God. (cont.)"
How do we free ourselves from ego?

- In another passage He says: "As long as the ego is subjected to carnal desires, sin and error continue." And He promised that with assiduous effort "Man will become free from egotism; he will be released from the material world. (The Universal House of Justice, 1985 Dec 02, Child Abuse, Psychology and Knowledge of Self)
What is the key to self-mastery?

- Whosoever has lost himself has found the universe and the inhabitants thereof. Whosoever is occupied with himself is wandering in the desert of heedlessness and regret. The "master-key" to self-mastery is self-forgetting. The road to the palace of life is through the path of renunciation. (Star of the West, vol. 17, no. 2, p. 348)
What if you could apprehend the wonders that God’s munificence and bounty have willed to entrust our souls?

- You… “would, of a truth, rid yourselves of attachment to all created things, and would gain a true knowledge of your own selves -- a knowledge which is the same as the comprehension of Mine own Being”.

(Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, sec. CLIII, p. 326-27)
What else?

Ye would find yourselves independent of all else but Me, and would perceive, with your inner and outer eye, and as manifest as the revelation of My effulgent Name, the seas of My loving-kindness and bounty moving within you.” (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, sec. CLIII, p. 326-27)
What can keep us from attaining that station?

- Suffer not your idle fancies, your evil passions, your insincerity and blindness of heart to dim the luster, or stain the sanctity, of so lofty a station . . . ” (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, sec. CLIII, p. 326-27)
Against what is life a constant struggle?

- Life is a constant struggle, not only against forces around us, but above all against our own "ego". We can never afford to rest on our oars, for if we do, we soon see ourselves carried downstream again. Generally speaking nine-tenths of the friends' troubles are because they don't do the Bahá'í thing, in relation to each other, to the administrative bodies or in their personal lives. (on behalf of Shoghi Effendi 1/8/49 Principles of Bahá'í Administration)
What should we not dwell upon?

- He urges you to persevere and add up your accomplishments, rather than to dwell on the dark side of things. Everyone's life has both a dark and bright side. The Master says: turn your back to the darkness and your face to Me. (on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 10/22/49)
How can we gain mastery over ourselves?

- …not everyone achieves easily and rapidly the victory over self.... the Cause has the spiritual power to re-create us if we make the effort to let that power influence us, and the greatest help in this respect is prayer. We must supplicate Bahá'u'lláh to assist us to overcome the failings in our own characters, and also exert our own will power in mastering ourselves. (On behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 1/27/45)
How can we manifest the potential forces of our true self?

Through the Teachings of this Day Star of Truth, every man will advance and develop until he attaineth the station at which he can manifest all the potential forces with which his inmost true self hath been endowed. It is for this very purpose that in every age and dispensation the prophets of God and His chosen Ones have appeared amongst men, and have evinced such power as is born of God and such might as only the Eternal can reveal. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, sec. XXVII, p. 68)
Our potentiality can be manifested only through what?

- Know thou that all men have been created in the nature made by God, the Guardian, the Self-Subsisting. Unto each one hath been prescribed a pre-ordained measure, as decreed in God's mighty and guarded Tablets. All that which ye potentially possess can, however, be manifested only as a result of your own volition. Your own acts testify this truth... (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, sec. LXXVII, p. 149)
Success, gain and progress depend on what?

- Success or failure, gain or loss, must, therefore, depend upon man’s own exertions. The more he striveth, the greater will be his progress. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 81-2)
What cleans defilement?

"Say: Deliver your souls, O people, from the bondage of self, and purify them from all attachment to anything besides Me. Remembrance of Me cleanseth all things from defilement, could ye but perceive it.

(Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 294)
What destroys many important souls?

- This [self-love] is a strange trait and the means of the destruction of many important souls in the world. If man be imbued with all good qualities but be selfish, all the other virtues will fade or pass away and eventually he will grow worse. (Abdu'l-Baha, Tablets of Abdu'l-Baha v1, p. 136)
What does nearness to God necessitate?

- In a word, nearness to God necessitates sacrifice of self, severance and the giving up of all to Him. Nearness is likeness.

What is the prison of self?

- When one is released from the prison of self, that is indeed freedom, for self is the greater prison. When this release takes place, one can never be imprisoned. (Abdu'l-Baha, Divine Philosophy, p. 21-22)
Assignment: Read and Study

- Read William S. Hatcher’s *The Concept of Spirituality*, II. The Process of Spiritual Growth, 2. The Nature of the Process (941-47), to get more and deeper background information for this and the next module.
Assignment: Meditate and Reflect

- The Reality of the Soul — Understanding Your True Self
  http://www.investigatereality.org/RealitySoul.htm
Meditate and Memorize

- Arise, O people, and, by the power of God's might, resolve to gain the victory over your own selves, that haply the whole earth may be freed and sanctified from its servitude to the gods of its idle fancies -- gods that have inflicted such loss upon, and are responsible for the misery of, their wretched worshipers. (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 93)
When you are ready you may go to the next module.

- 6. How to Attain Spirituality?