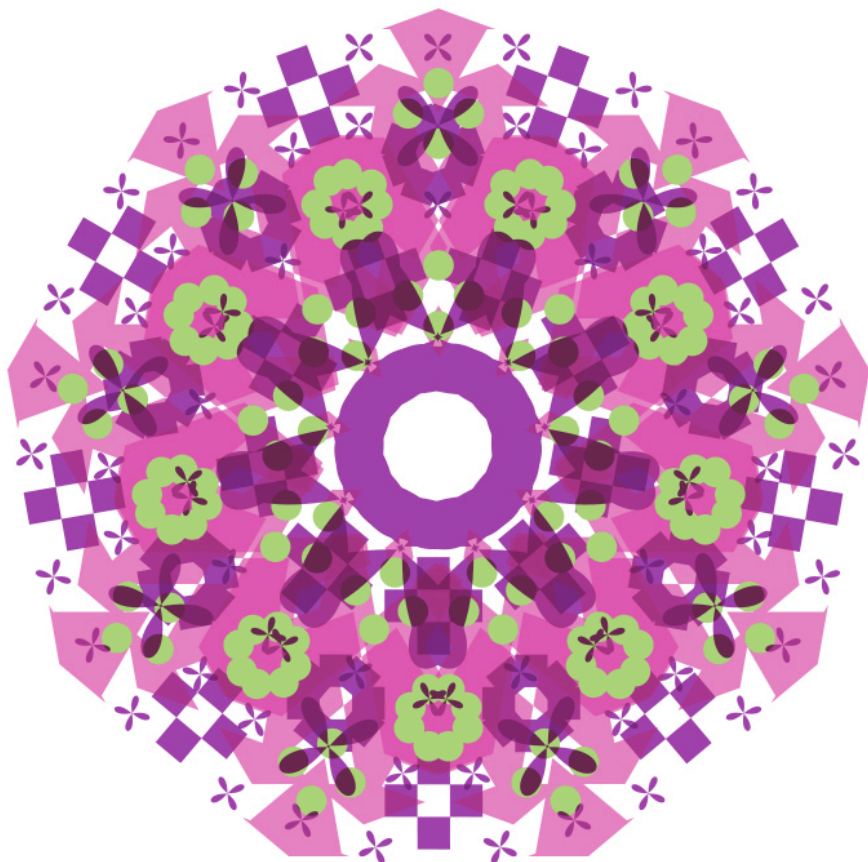


Soul Food

A Sense of Time



A Sense of Time

Exploring the precious nature of time – how quickly it passes, and how profound it can be when we make the most of it.

Program

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So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.

– Matthew 6:14

01. Modern Values

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings, but shorter tempers; wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints; we spend more, but have less; we buy more, but enjoy it less.

We have bigger houses, but smaller families; more conveniences, but less time; we have more degrees, but less sense; more knowledge, but less judgement; more experts, but more problems; more medicine, but less wellness.

We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often. We've learnt how to make a living, but not a life; we've added years to life, but not life to years.

We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbour. We've conquered outer space, but not inner space; we've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul; we've split the atom, but not our prejudice.

We have higher incomes, but lower morals; we've become long on quantity, but short on quality. These are the times of tall men and short character; steep profits and shallow relationships.

These are the times of world peace, but domestic warfare; more leisure, but less fun; more kinds of food, but less nutrition. These are the days of two incomes, but more divorce; of fancier houses, but broken homes. It is a time when there is more in the show window and nothing in the stock room; a time when technology can bring this letter to you, and a time when you can choose to make a difference.

– Written by a Columbine student

02. Each moment is fragile and fleeting.

The moment of the past cannot be kept, however beautiful.

The moment of the present cannot be held, however enjoyable.

The moment of the future cannot be caught, however desirable.

But the mind is desperate to fix the river in place:

Possessed by ideas of the past, preoccupied with images of the future, it overlooks the plain truth of the moment.

The one who can dissolve her mind will suddenly have the Desert of the Tao at her feet, and clarity at hand.

– *Lao Tzu, Hua Hu Ching*

03. All souls spontaneously arise from the Supreme Abode;

Afterwards their own acts are the cause of their happiness and sorrow.

As a cloud-layer produced by the sunlight hides the sun and is itself seen instead, so Egoism sprung up from the Self hides the truth of the Self and is itself seen.

– *Yoga Vasistha*

04. Some men's lives are solely occupied with the things of this world; their minds

are so circumscribed by exterior manners and traditional interests that they are

blind to any other realm of existence, to the spiritual significance of all things!

They think and dream of earthly fame, of material progress. Sensuous delights

and comfortable surroundings bound their horizon, their highest ambitions

centre in successes of worldly conditions and circumstances! They curb not their

lower propensities; they eat, drink, and sleep! Like the animal, they have no

thought beyond their own physical well-being. It is true that these necessities

must be despatched. Life is a load which must be carried on while we are on

earth, but the cares of the lower things of life should not be allowed to

monopolize all the thoughts and aspirations of a human being. The heart's

ambitions should ascend to a more glorious goal, mental activity should rise to

higher levels! Men should hold in their souls the vision of celestial perfection, and

there prepare a dwelling-place for the inexhaustible bounty of the Divine Spirit.

Let your ambition be the achievement on earth of a Heavenly civilization! I ask

for you the supreme blessing, that you may be so filled with the vitality of the

Heavenly Spirit that you may be the cause of life to the world.

– *'Abdu'l-Bahá, from the Bahá'í Writings*

05. Let there be many windows in your soul,
That all the glory of the universe may beautify it.
Not the narrow pane of one creed can catch the radiant rays that shine from
countless sources.
Tear away the blinds of superstition:
Let the light pour through fair windows,
Broad as truth itself and high as heaven...
Tune your ear to all the wordless music of the stars
And to the voice of nature,
And your heart shall turn to truth and goodness as the plant turns to the sun.
A thousand unseen hands reach down to help you in their peace-crowned
heights,
And all the forces of the firmament shall fortify your strength.
Be not afraid to thrust aside half-truths and grasp the whole.

– *Anon*

06. And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, “Master,
what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”
He said unto him, “What is written in the law? How readeest thou?”
He answering said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with
all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy
neighbour as thyself.” But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, “And
who is my neighbour?”

And Jesus answering said, “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho,
and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him,
and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain
priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And
likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed
by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he
was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and
bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and
brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to
the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest
more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest
thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?” And he said, “He that
showed mercy on him.”

Then said Jesus unto him, “Go and do thou likewise.”

– *Gospel according to St Luke, Christianity*

07. In looking into matters social and political I have but one rule, that in thinking of the conditions of any body of men I shall ask myself, 'How could you bear it yourself? What would you feel if you were poor against a system under which you live?' I have always been uneasy when I had to ask myself that question, and of late years I have had to ask it so often, that I have seldom had it out of my mind: and the answer to it has more and more made me ashamed of my own position, and more and more made me feel that if I had not been born rich or well-to-do I should have found my position unendurable... Nothing can argue me out of this feeling, which I say plainly is a matter of religion to me: the contrasts of rich and poor are unendurable and ought not to be endured by either rich or poor.

– *William Morris, letter to C.E. Maurice*

08. **O Brethren!**

Be forbearing one with another and set not your affections on things below. Pride not yourselves in your glory, and be not ashamed of abasement.

By My beauty! I have created all things from dust, and to dust will I return them again.

O Children of Dust!

Tell the rich of the midnight sighing of the poor, lest heedlessness lead them into the path of destruction, and deprive them of the Tree of Wealth. To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues.

O Son of My Handmaid!

Be not troubled in poverty nor confident in riches, for poverty is followed by riches, and riches are followed by poverty. Yet to be poor in all save God is a wondrous gift, belittle not the value thereof, for in the end it will make thee rich in God, and thus thou shalt know the meaning of the utterance, "In truth ye are the poor," and the holy words, "God is the all-possessing," shall even as the true morn break forth gloriously resplendent upon the horizon of the lover's heart, and abide secure on the throne of wealth.

– *Bahá'u'lláh, from the Bahá'í Writings*

09. There is a Tibetan saying that “everything rests on the tip of one’s motivation.” This indicates the significance in every moment of cultivating altruistic, selfless intention—bodhicitta. Endowed with such a luminous heart even the smallest words, deeds and actions that one accomplishes have vast and beneficial implications. This is the transforming magic of bodhicitta, a veritable wish—fulfilling jewel.

– *Nyoshul Kenpo Rinpoche*

10. **Pebbles in the Bowl**

A young monk was spending some time each day in meditation and contemplation. He wondered how many thoughts during those sessions were virtuous (about doing good deeds) or non-virtuous (about deeds on hatred, greed, or prejudice). He collected a pile of pebbles and put them in front of himself. He also placed a bowl to his left and another to his right. As he meditated, he would put a pebble in the left-hand bowl when he recognized a virtuous thought. For a non-virtuous thought, he would place a pebble in the right-hand bowl. At the end of the first day, he looked down to see how he had done and was surprised to see that all the pebbles were in the “non-virtuous” bowl. Without judging himself, he simply continued this practice, starting over each day. After a few days, the number of pebbles in the two bowls was about equal. After a few more days, almost all the pebbles were in the “virtuous” bowl.

– *Story by Dr Joseph Parent, Zen Buddhism*

O SON OF BEING!

Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning; for death, unheralded, shall come upon thee and thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds.

– *Bahá'u'lláh, from the Bahá'í Writings*

11. **Mr. Randall meets ‘Abdu’l-Bahá**

Mr. Randall had long had a lively interest in religion. Born a Catholic, he had become an Episcopalian, but he had gone into Theosophy, Christian Science and New Thought movements; he had studied ancient religions. He felt he knew all there was to know about religion. He had no real interest in a new faith, but at the invitation of a friend, he came to hear ‘Abdu’l-Bahá lecture in Boston in 1912. Listening to Him, he thought that this Man was certainly a very great Man, truly a Saint.

As Mr Randall was leaving he heard a secretary to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ask if “there was anyone who would be gracious enough to buy ‘Abdu’l-Bahá some fresh grape juice as he really enjoyed it and was looking forward to a glass after the talk.” Mr. Randall replied he would be happy to do so. He brought the juice to the hotel thinking he could give it to someone to take into ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, as he himself did not want to become involved at a personal level.

However, he was soon drawn into conversation with friends as he handed the juice to a secretary. The next thing he knew the secretary had returned with a glass of juice on a tray and knowing a personal interview with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was particularly sought after by the people there, he invited Mr. Randall to take the prepared juice into ‘Abdu’l-Bahá himself. Mr. Randall didn’t like the idea yet he did not wish to appear ungracious so he consented.

He planned to quietly put it on a little table just inside the door to the room where ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was sitting and escape without being seen. And so he did.

But just as he was backing out, pleased that he had not disturbed ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, who seemed asleep in a chair, his eyes opened and he looked directly at Mr Randall and said “be seated.” As Mr. Randall sat down ‘Abdu’l-Bahá closed his eyes again.

William Randall sat still for a few moments and then began to get angry, thinking that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá did not know in whose presence He was sitting. Randall became more and more agitated as time wore on. He wondered, “what does it mean that I have to sit in the presence of this old Man while He falls asleep?” He thought about getting up and leaving, but decided against it. He was conscious of how rude that would seem. Soon his legs began to go to sleep, in fact his whole body began to get numb. Even his collar, on which he prided himself, starched and stiff and never wilted in public – drooped down. His anger increased.

At the peak of his rage, a voice inside him said, “You have studied all the great religions of the world and what good have they done you, for you cannot sit in the presence of an old man for 20 minutes in a state of peace and composure?”

As this thought struck him ‘Abdu’l-Bahá opened his eyes, looked directly at him and said, “the intellect is good but until it has become the servant of the heart, it is of little avail.”

His words were a turning point in Randall’s life.

O SON OF SPIRIT!

My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart, that thine may be a sovereignty ancient, imperishable and everlasting.

– Bahá’u’lláh, from the Bahá’í Writings

12. Mencius said, “Though nothing happens that is not due to destiny, one accepts willingly what is one’s proper destiny. That is why he who understands destiny does not stand under a wall on the verge of collapse. He who dies after having done his best in following the Way dies according to his proper destiny.

It is never anyone’s proper destiny to die in fetters.”

– Mencius, Confucianism

I don’t know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.

– Albert Schweitzer

13. Everyone has heard the story which has gone the rounds of New England, of a strong and beautiful bug which came out of the dry leaf of an old table of apple-tree wood, which had stood in the farmer’s kitchen for sixty years, first in Connecticut, and afterward in Massachusetts—from an egg deposited in the living tree many years earlier, as appeared by counting the annual layers beyond it—which was heard gnawing out for several weeks, hatched perchance by the heat of an urn. Who does not feel his faith in a resurrection and immortality strengthened by hearing this?

– Henry David Thoreau

14. In the absolute sense... there is nothing that remains the same even for two consecutive moments; for the Five Khandhas, or Groups of Existence, are in a state of perpetual change, of continual dissolution and renewal. They die every moment, and every moment new ones are born. Hence it follows that there is no such thing as a real existence, or "being", but only as it were an endless process, a continuous change, a "becoming," consisting in a "producing," and in a "being produced"; in a "process of action," and in a "process of reaction," or "rebirth."

This process of perpetual "producing" and "being produced" may best be compared with an ocean wave. In the case of a wave, there is not the slightest quantity of water travelling over the surface of the sea. But the wave structure, that hastens over the surface of the water, creating the appearance of one and the same mass of water, is, in reality, nothing but the continuous rising and falling of continuous, but quite different, masses of water, produced by the transmission of force generated by the wind. Even so, the Buddha did not teach that Ego-entities hasten through the ocean of rebirth, but merely life-waves, which, according to their nature and activities (good, or evil), manifest themselves here as men, there as animals, and elsewhere as invisible beings.

– *The Eightfold Path, Buddhism*

15. **How should we believe?**

In what way should we struggle and give all our energy to living a good life? We should do it with great perseverance so that we can be found worthy to receive the power given from heaven and receive the glory of the Holy Spirit in the innermost depths of the soul.

– *Makarios, the Book of Mystical Chapters*

16. **Twelve Things to Remember**

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|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. The value of time. | 7. The influence of example. |
| 2. The success of perseverance. | 8. The obligation of duty. |
| 3. The pleasure of working. | 9. The wisdom of economy. |
| 4. The dignity of simplicity. | 10. The virtue of patience. |
| 5. The worth of character. | 11. The improvement of talent. |
| 6. The power of kindness. | 12. The joy of originating. |

– *Marshall Field, from Elbert Hubbard's scrapbook*

17. Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity.

Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbour, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face.

Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, an answerer of the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge.

Be fair in thy judgment, and guarded in thy speech.

Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men.

Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression.

Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts.

Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive.

Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring.

Be an ornament to the countenance of truth, a crown to the brow of fidelity, a pillar of the temple of righteousness, a breath of life to the body of mankind, an ensign of the hosts of justice, a luminary above the horizon of virtue, a dew to the soil of the human heart, an ark on the ocean of knowledge, a sun in the heaven of bounty, a gem on the diadem of wisdom, a shining light in the firmament of thy generation, a fruit upon the tree of humility.

– *Bahá'u'lláh, from the Bahá'í Writings*



About Soul Food

Soul Food is a monthly event held at the State Library of Victoria, providing an opportunity to relax in a tranquil environment and reflect on inspiring themes.

It features music, audio-visual pieces and readings from various Faiths; indigenous, ancient and modern, from all over the world. Soul Food's purpose is to inspire us to transform our lives, our neighbourhoods and communities, with actions that promote the unity and betterment of society.

Soul Food is a free community event open to all.

Venue

State Library of Victoria,
Village Roadshow Theatrette
Corner Swanston St & La Trobe St
(Enter via La Trobe Street)

Time

11.00am – 12.00pm

New Dates for 2015!

February 1st
March 1st
April 5th
May 3rd
June 7th
July 5th
August 2nd
September 6th
October 4th
November 1st
December 6th

Further Information

For further information about Soul Food events in Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania or Western Australia please visit www.soulfood.com.au.

Facebook & Meetup

Join us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/soulfoodvic

Join us on Meetup: www.meetup.com/Soul-Food-Melbourne/

Study Circles

The Bahá'í community offers a series of regular 'Study Circles' – as an opportunity to further explore subjects related to spiritual development. Study Circles are small, informal groups, and provide an environment in which to discuss meaningful topics with like-minded people. The first Study Circle is titled "Reflections on the Life of the Spirit", from the Ruhi Study Circle series. It is a three unit study on; Understanding the Bahá'í Writings, Prayer & Meditation, and Life & Death.

If you enjoy Soul Food then a Study Circle may also appeal to you. For more information please contact 03 9415 6007 or email soulfoodvic@gmail.com.

Virtues Parenting Workshops

We are very excited to announce an initiative supported by Soul Food. Based on the Virtues Project, which is honoured by the United Nations and endorsed by the Dalai Lama, the *Virtues Parenting Workshops* introduce a practical and effective approach to speaking the language of the virtues in the home – to develop confidence, self-esteem, excellence and courage in your children. Presented by Mojgan Tosif (BA Ed) a Master Facilitator for the Virtues Project.

The first sessions of workshops have commenced, but if you are interested in future sessions in the new year, please contact us to express your interest.

The Bahá'í Community of Victoria

Soul Food is an initiative of the Bahá'í Community of Victoria. For further information about the Bahá'í Faith please visit www.bahai.org.au.

Supporters

Soul Food is proudly supported by the Baha'i Council of South-Eastern Australia.