

Benefits of Detachment in the Next World and How to Let Go

By Susan Gammage ¹

We are all probably familiar with the idea of detachment or letting go of the things of the material world and some of the potential benefits we can achieve in this world by doing so.

Our greatest efforts must be directed towards detachment from the things of the world; we must strive to become more spiritual, more luminous, to follow the counsel of the Divine Teaching, to serve the cause of unity and true equality, to be merciful, to reflect the love of the Highest on all men, so that the light of the Spirit shall be apparent in all our deeds, to the end that all humanity shall be united, the stormy sea thereof calmed, and all rough waves disappear from off the surface of life's ocean henceforth unruffled and peaceful. Then will the New Jerusalem be seen by mankind, who will enter through its gates and receive the Divine Bounty. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, p. 87)

Now what about turning our attention to the ways we can benefit from letting go here, when we get to the next world. If you want to skip ahead to the end, I've made a list of them for you.

We want God to glorify us:

The only person who recognized Him and performed pilgrimage with Him is the one round whom revolve eight Vahids, in whom God hath gloried before the Concourse on high by virtue of his absolute detachment and for his being wholly devoted to the Will of God. (Selections from the Writings of the Báb, p. 90)

We want to never be forgotten and our progress to be infinite:

Man must attach himself to an infinite reality, so that his glory, his joy, and his progress may be infinite. Only the spirit is real; everything else is as shadow. All bodies are disintegrated in the end; only reality subsists. All physical perfections come to an end; but the divine virtues are infinite. How many kings have flourished in luxury and in a brief moment all has disappeared! Their glory and their honor are forgotten. Where are all these sovereigns now? But those who have been servants of the divine beauty are never forgotten. The result of their works is everywhere visible. What king is there of two thousand years ago whose kingdom has lived in the hearts? But those disciples who were devoted to God - poor people who had neither fortune nor position - are to-day trees bearing fruit. Their banner is raised higher every day. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Divine Philosophy, p. 137)

¹ Prepared by David Bowie (2023) for posting, with permission of author, at https://bahai-library.com/gammage_various_essays

We want to quaff the wine of eternal life:

O SON OF PASSION!

Cleanse thyself from the defilement of riches and in perfect peace advance into the realm of poverty; that from the well-spring of detachment thou mayest quaff the wine of immortal life. (Bahá'u'lláh, The Persian Hidden Words 55)

We want a better condition and station in the next world:

How great the difference between the condition of these people and the station of such valiant souls as have passed beyond the sea of names and pitched their tents upon the shores of the ocean of detachment. (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 57-58)

We want to attain true glory and honour:

To attain to true glory and honour, man should exercise justice and equity, forbear to act in an oppressive manner, render service to his government, and work for the good of his fellow-citizens. Were he to seek after aught else but this he would indeed be in manifest loss. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, The Compilation of Compilations vol II, p. 345, #2072)

We want to inhale the holy fragrances diffusing from God's merciful gardens:

When thou wilt purify and clarify thy spiritual nostrils from every worldly moisture, then thou wilt inhale the holy fragrances diffusing from the merciful gardens of these worlds. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í World Faith, p. 393)

We want the goodly and bountiful reward God has promised:

We, verily, have decreed in Our Book a goodly and bountiful reward to whosoever will turn away from wickedness and lead a chaste and godly life. He, in truth, is the Great Giver, the All-Bountiful. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, LIX, p. 117)

We want to be a seat of God's revelation:

He hath chosen out of the whole world the hearts of His servants," He explains, "and made them each a seat for the revelation of His glory. Wherefore, sanctify them from every defilement, that the things for which they were created may be engraven upon them. This indeed is a token of God's bountiful favor. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, CXXXVI, p. 297)

We want God to eternally live in us:

If thou lovest Me, turn away from thyself; and if thou seekest My pleasure, regard not thine own; that thou mayest die in Me and I may eternally live in thee. (Bahá'u'lláh, The Arabic Hidden Words 7)

We want spirituality and an exalted position:

It is because of this attachment that men have been deprived of essential spirituality and exalted position. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, pp . 124-125)

We want to be born into the light of the world of Divinity:

Material development may be likened to the glass of a lamp, whereas divine virtues and spiritual susceptibilities are the light within the glass. The lamp chimney is worthless without the light; likewise, man in his material condition requires the radiance and vivification of the divine graces and merciful attributes. Without the presence of the Holy Spirit he is lifeless. Although physically and mentally alive, he is spiritually dead. Christ announced, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," meaning that man must be born again. As the babe is born into the light of this physical world, so must the physical and intellectual man be born into the light of the world of Divinity. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 288)

We want to attain a supreme station, the habitation of transcendent holiness and sublimity:

At one time this sublime Word was heard from the Tongue of Him Who is the Possessor of all being and the Lord of the throne on high and of earth below -- exalted is the glory of His utterance -- : Piety and detachment are even as two most great luminaries of the heaven of teaching. Blessed the one who hath attained unto this supreme station, this habitation of transcendent holiness and sublimity. (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 253)

Righteousness and detachment are like unto two most great lights for the heaven of teaching. Blessed is he who attaineth this high station. (Bahá'u'lláh, The Individual and Teaching - Raising the Divine Call, p. 3)

We want to quaff the wine of immortal life:

O SON OF PASSION!

Cleanse thyself from the defilement of riches and in perfect peace advance into the realm of poverty; that from the well-spring of detachment thou mayest quaff the wine of immortal life. (Bahá'u'lláh, The Persian Hidden Words 55)

We want to receive the rich prize promised by God:

Blessed are they that have soared on the wings of detachment and attained the station which, as ordained by God, overshadoweth the entire creation, whom neither the vain imaginations of the learned, nor the multitude of the hosts of the earth have succeeded in deflecting from His Cause. Who is there among you, O people, who will renounce the world, and draw nigh unto God, the Lord of all names? Where is he to be found who, through the power of My name that transcendeth all created things, will cast away the things that men possess, and cling, with all his might, to the things which God, the Knower of the unseen and of the seen, hath bidden him observe? Thus hath His bounty been sent down unto men, His testimony fulfilled, and His proof shone forth above the Horizon of mercy. Rich is the prize that shall be won by him who hath believed and exclaimed: "Lauded art Thou, O Beloved of all worlds! Magnified be Thy name, O Thou the Desire of every understanding heart!" (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, XIV, pp. 34-35)

We want to attain God's presence:

In another Tablet Bahá'u'lláh states that there are three barriers between God and man. He exhorts the believers to pass beyond them so that they may be enabled to attain His presence. (Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh* v 2, pp. 35-36)

We want God's ultimate grace:

Only he who is severed from the world shall achieve this ultimate grace, he who is a captive of divine love, empty of passion and self, from every aspect true unto his God, humble, lowly, supplicating, in tears, submissive in the presence of the Lord. (Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 242, #199)

We want to reach the highest and innermost sanctuary of the inner meaning of the Word of God:

Please God, that we avoid the land of denial, and advance into the ocean of acceptance, so that we may perceive, with an eye purged from all conflicting elements, the worlds of unity and diversity, of variation and oneness, of limitation and detachment, and wing our flight unto the highest and innermost sanctuary of the inner meaning of the Word of God. (Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 160)

Summary

There are many potential benefits from letting go. Some we'll receive in this world, and others we'll see in the next. Any one of them would be worth letting go for; but the potential combinations are very compelling! Hope you find some good ones below!

21 Potential Benefits in the Next World

1. God will glorify us
2. never be forgotten
3. progress will be infinite
4. quaff the wine of eternal life
5. a better condition and station in the next world
6. attain true glory and honour
7. inhale the holy fragrances diffusing from God's merciful gardens
8. God's goodly and bountiful reward
9. perpetual bounty
10. the fruits of God's blessed Tree
11. a seat of God's revelation
12. God will eternally live in us
13. Spirituality
14. an exalted position
15. born into the light of the world of Divinity
16. attain a high station of transcendent holiness and sublimity
17. quaff the wine of immortal life
18. receive the rich prize promised by God
19. attain God's presence
20. God's ultimate grace
21. reach the highest and innermost sanctuary of the inner meaning of the Word of God

Conclusion:

Wouldn't it be wonderful if 'Abdu'l-Bahá could say this about each of us?

O thou who hast approached toward God!
 Verily I have received thy letter and my heart was dilated by the content of thy expression, for it indicated the illumination of thy heart, the spirituality of thy soul, thy detachment from all the grades of this nether world and thy yearning after the effulgences of the Realm of Light. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá v2, p. 447)

Surely we all want these things! Surely these benefits outweigh the things we think we want to cling to, from the material world!

Fifty-Seven Ways to Let Go

Having looked at detachment, what we need to let go, and the benefits of doing so, both in this world and in the next. Let's turn our attention to how we do it. If you want to skip to the end, I've provided a list for you.

We detach when we turn our face towards the courts of the Lord:

The essence of detachment is for man to turn his face towards the courts of the Lord, to enter His Presence, behold His Countenance, and stand as witness before Him. (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 155)

We detach when we recognize and love God:

Whoso hath loved Thee, can never feel attached to his own self, except for the purpose of furthering Thy Cause; and whoso hath recognized Thee can recognize naught else except Thee, and can turn to no one save Thee. (Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh, CXVI, p. 198)

We detach when we advance towards God:

Pass beyond the narrow retreats of your evil and corrupt desires, and advance into the vast immensity of the realm of God, and abide ye in the meads of sanctity and of detachment, that the fragrance of your deeds may lead the whole of mankind to the ocean of God's unfading glory. (Gleanings From the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, CXV, p. 241)

We detach when we trust God:

And likewise, He saith: "Say to them that are of a fearful heart: be strong, fear not, behold your God." This blessed verse is a proof of the greatness of the Revelation, and of the greatness of the Cause, inasmuch as the blast of the trumpet must needs spread confusion throughout the world, and fear and trembling amongst all men. (Bahá'u'lláh, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 147)

That seeker must, at all times, put his trust in God, must renounce the peoples of the earth, must detach himself from the world of dust, and cleave unto Him Who is the Lord of Lords. (Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitáb-i-Íqán, p. 193)

We detach when we live in accordance with the teachings of God:

One may be wealthy, yet detached from material things. Man can achieve this if he lives his life in accordance with the teachings of God. In one of His Tablets, Bahá'u'lláh states that the good things of this world and its beautiful products are all the manifestations of the attributes of God. To possess them will not become the cause of attachment to material things, provided the individual does not fix his affections upon them, nor allow himself to be possessed by them, because this world and all that is therein are like unto a passing shadow and transitory. (Adib Taherzadeh, The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 22-23)

We detach when we want to turn to the things that belong to God:

Wert thou, for the sake of God, to ponder, though it be but for an hour, upon the things which have occurred in former times and more recently, thou wouldst turn

away from the things thou dost possess unto the things which belong unto God, and wouldst become a means for the exaltation of His Word. (Bahá'u'lláh, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 92)

We detach when we seek God's pleasure and not our own:

If thou lovest Me, turn away from thyself; and if thou seekest My pleasure, regard not thine own. (Bahá'u'lláh, The Arabic Hidden Words 7)

We detach when we are faithful to God:

Therefore, we must be faithful to Him and turn away from our own selfish desires and fancies in order that we may accomplish that which is required of us by our Lord. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 461)

We detach when we expect no help or aid from anyone but God:

It behoveth thee to sever thyself from all desires save thy Lord, the Supreme, expecting no help or aid from anyone in the universe, not even from thy father or children. Resign thyself to God! ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í World Faith, pp. 374-375)

We detach when we supplicate and invoke God and serve His Cause:

Know that nothing will benefit thee in this life save supplication and invocation unto God, service in His vineyard, and, with a heart full of love, be in constant servitude unto Him. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í World Faith, p. 375)

We detach when we put our reliance on the remembrance of God:

Delight not yourselves in the things of the world and its vain ornaments, neither set your hopes on them. Let your reliance be on the remembrance of God, the Most Exalted, the Most Great. He will, ere long, bring to naught all the things ye possess. Let Him be your fear, and forget not His covenant with you, and be not of them that are shut out as by a veil from Him. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, LXVI, pp. 127-128)

We detach when we take firm hold on the precepts of God:

Put away, therefore, the things ye have devised and to which ye cleave, and take firm hold on the precepts of God, that haply ye may attain that which He hath purposed for you, and be of them that pursue a right course. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, LXVI, p. 127)

We detach when we cling to God:

Cleave to the Root of Knowledge, and to Him Who is the Fountain thereof, that thou mayest find thyself independent of all who claim to be well versed in human learning, and whose claim no clear proof, nor the testimony of any enlightening book, can support. (Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh* v 1, pp. 33-34)

We detach when we reflect the love of God on all men:

Our greatest efforts must be directed towards detachment from the things of the world; we must strive to become more spiritual, more luminous, to follow the counsel of the Divine Teaching, to serve the cause of unity and true equality, to be merciful, to reflect the love of the Highest on all men, so that the light of the Spirit shall be apparent in all our deeds, to the end that all humanity shall be united, the stormy sea thereof calmed, and all rough waves disappear from off the surface of life's ocean henceforth unruffled and peaceful. (Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 87)

We detach when we stand as witness before God:

The essence of detachment is for man to turn his face towards the courts of the Lord, to enter His Presence, behold His Countenance, and stand as witness before Him. (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 155)

We detach by cutting ourselves from all desires, attaching our hearts to God and serving his Cause:

I hope that thou wilt cut thyself from all that is in this world; wilt sever thyself from all desires of this transitory world; wilt attach thy heart entirely to the light of truth and wilt, at all times, rise in the service of truth in the rose-garden of God. (Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá v1, p. 132)

We detach by beseeching God that nothing will tarnish the purity or embitter the sweetness of the grace which flows through us:

Beseech the Lord your God to grant that no earthly entanglements, no worldly affections, no ephemeral pursuits, may tarnish the purity, or embitter the sweetness, of that grace which flows through you. (Lady Blomfield, *The Chosen Highway*, p. 18)

We detach by doing anything that will deter us from beholding God's face, or tempting us to follow the promptings of our evil and corrupt inclinations:

Cleanse from your hearts the love of worldly things, from your tongues every remembrance except His remembrance, from your entire being whatsoever may deter you from beholding His face, or may tempt you to follow the promptings of your evil and corrupt inclinations. Let God be your fear, O people, and be ye of them that tread the path of righteousness. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, CXXVIII, p. 275)

We detach when we turn to His Messengers:

When the believer turns with true love to the Manifestation of God, he cannot help but leave aside his own interests and desires and seek only the good pleasure of His Lord. Yet in so doing, he will receive heavenly virtues and powers as a by-product of his love for and submission to the Manifestation of God. (Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Baha'u'llah v 2*, p. 37)

We detach When we turn away from ideas which degrade the human soul:

He must turn away from ideas which degrade the human soul, so that day by day and hour by hour he may advance upward and higher to spiritual perception of the continuity of the human reality. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'í World Faith*, pp. 265-266)

We detach when we turn away from idle fancies and vain imaginings:

Make them, then, to quaff from the hand of Thy grace the wine of Thy mercy, that it may assure their hearts, and cause them to turn away from the left hand of idle fancies and vain imaginings to the right hand of confidence and certitude. (Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 111-112)

Give ear unto the Voice of this trustworthy Counsellor: direct thy steps from the left unto the right, that is turn away from idle fancy unto certitude. (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 42)

Tear asunder, O my God, the veil of vain imaginings that hath obscured the vision of Thy people, that all may haste towards Thee, may tread the path of Thy pleasure, and walk in the ways of Thy Faith. (Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh, LXIII, p. 102)

We detach when we cast away the veils of idle learning that are current amongst men:

Not, however, until thou consumest with the flame of utter detachment those veils of idle learning, that are current amongst men, canst thou behold the resplendent morn of true knowledge. (Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 68-69)

We detach when we turn away from satanic promptings:

Man must emulate the merciful God and turn away from satanic promptings in order that universal inclination shall be toward peace, love and unity and the discord of war vanish. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 233)

We detach when we give up the important for the most important:

The Guardian attaches the greatest importance to your work; and is delighted to see that you are carrying on your various projects with so much enthusiasm and

devotion. It would be ideal if an offer, such as that made, could be accepted; but as the Cause has so many burdens to bear at this time, we are forced to do as 'Abdu'l-Bahá said—give up the important for the most important. (Shoghi Effendi, *The Compilation of Compilations vol II*, p. 117, #1477)

We detach through tests and suffering:

The mind and spirit of man advance when he is tried by suffering. The more the ground is ploughed the better the seed will grow, the better the harvest will be. Just as the plough furrows the earth deeply, purifying it of weeds and thistles, so suffering and tribulation free man from the petty affairs of this worldly life until he arrives at a state of complete detachment. His attitude in this world will be that of divine happiness. Man is, so to speak, unripe: the heat of the fire of suffering will mature him. Look back to the times past and you will find that the greatest men have suffered most.' (Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 178)

We detach when we pay no attention to mortal riches:

And were they to pass through a valley of pure gold and mines of precious silver, they should regard them as wholly unworthy of their attention. (Bahá'u'lláh, *Gems of Divine Mysteries*, pp. 59-60)

We detach by using our eyes and ears:

The light of truth hath made thine eyes to see, the voice of God hath made thine ears to hear and the lights emanating from the beauty of the Light of the World both made thine heart attracted and astonished. (Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá v1, p. 132)

We detach when we stop letting our possessions possess us:

Detachment does not consist in setting fire to one's house, or becoming bankrupt or throwing one's fortune out of the window, or even giving away all of one's possessions. Detachment consists in refraining from letting our possessions possess us. A prosperous merchant who is not absorbed in his business knows severance. A banker whose occupation does not prevent him from serving humanity is severed. A poor man can be attached to a small thing. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, pp. 135-136)

We detach when we engage in a profession and are self-supporting:

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. (Shoghi Effendi, *Lights of Guidance*, p. 624, #2109)

We detach when we shut our eyes to rest, quietude and the mortal life:

In this day, whatever soul intendeth to raise the voice of the Kingdom, and to draw people under the Tree of Life in the ideal paradise, and to invite them to eternal life, must first be delivered from all attachments, must even shut his eyes to rest, quietude and to the mortal life of this world. (Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá v2, p. 358)

We detach when we turn away from imitation and following the traces of our forefathers:

It is incumbent on these servants that they cleanse the heart—which is the wellspring of divine treasures—from every marking, and that they turn away from imitation, which is following the traces of their forefathers and sires, and shut the door of friendliness and enmity upon all the people of the earth. (Bahá'u'lláh, The Seven Valleys, p. 5)

We detach when we strip ourselves of old beliefs and past customs:

It is incumbent upon you to strip yourselves of every old garment (i. e., old beliefs and past customs). It is incumbent upon you to be severed from this contemptible earthly world. It is incumbent upon you (to seek after) the Kingdom, in this great Day! (Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá v1, p. 144)

We detach when we turn away from ancestral imitations and investigate reality:

Likewise, in the wider field if all the existing religious systems will turn away from ancestral imitations and investigate reality, seeking the real meanings of the Holy Books, they will unite and agree upon the same foundation, reality itself. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 198)

We detach when we strip ourselves of the imperfections of the material world:

Man must sever himself from the influences of the world of matter, from the world of nature and its laws; for the material world is the world of corruption and death. It is the world of evil and darkness, of animalism and ferocity, bloodthirstiness, ambition and avarice, of self-worship, egotism and passion; it is the world of nature. Man must strip himself of all these imperfections, must sacrifice these tendencies which are peculiar to the outer and material world of existence. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 451)

We detach when all of our personal and material interests revolve around the Faith:

On the other hand, genuine detachment from earthly things is achieved when the individual makes the Cause of God the pivot of his life, so that all his personal and material interests may revolve around his Faith. In this case, he can benefit from his material possessions without being attached to them. And since the Cause of God is the prime motivating influence in his life, he will never act against the teachings of his Faith. (Adib Taherzadeh, The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 23)

We detach when we offer up our time, serve in a locality, give up the comforts of home, go pioneering, teach, be persecuted and even give up our lives:

To offer up one's time, to labour for the establishment of the Faith in a locality, to give up the comforts of home and to go as a pioneer to foreign lands, to offer up one's substance for the promotion of the Cause, to be persecuted for one's faith, and even to give one's life at the end... (Adib Taherzadeh, The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 23)

We detach when we use our interests in promoting spiritual pursuits:

This does not mean that he has to forego his personal interests, but rather to use them in promoting his spiritual pursuits, and not to allow earthly things to come between him and God. (Adib Taherzadeh, The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 21)

We detach when we rely on prayer:

Verily, I pray God to sanctify thee from the material and thus clothe thee with the garment of holiness and the mantle of purity and send through thee the glad-tidings of thy Lord from the Kingdom of Heaven. (Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá v2, p. 270)

We detach when we use the Hidden Words:

The Hidden Words can exert a potent influence in freeing man from the fetters of materialism and enabling him to win the battle against his own self. (Adib Taherzadeh, The Revelation of Baha'u'llah v 1, p. 77)

We detach when we seek distinction in the pursuit of virtue and excellence:

Let them be content with their wages, and seek distinction in truthfulness, straightforwardness, and the pursuit of virtue and excellence . . . To attain to true glory and honour, man should exercise justice and equity, forbear to act in an oppressive manner, render service to his government, and work for the good of his fellow-citizens. Were he to seek after aught else but this he would indeed be in manifest loss. (The Compilation of Compilations, vol II, p. 345, #2072)

We detach when we dedicate our lives for His service:

Ours is the duty to strive by day and night to fulfill our own obligations and then trust in His Guidance and never failing Grace. Unity amongst the friends, selflessness in our labors in His Path, detachment from all worldly things, the greatest prudence and caution in every step we take, earnest endeavor to carry out only what is His Holy Will and Pleasure, the constant awareness of His Presence and of the example of His Life, the absolute shunning of whomsoever we feel to be an

enemy of the Cause ... these, and foremost among them is the need for unity, appear to me as our most vital duties, should we dedicate our lives for His service. (Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 16)

We detach when we teach:

Let those whose time, resources and means allow, travel throughout the length and breadth of that vast continent, let them scatter to the most distant regions of the earth and, fired with enthusiasm and detachment, hand on the torch of God's undying flame to the waiting multitudes of a sadly-stricken world. (Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'í Administration, p. 88)

We detach when we separate ourselves from all thoughts:

Separate thyself from all thoughts, strip thyself from the unclean garment of attachment to this drossful (or earthly) world, arise for the service of thy Lord, the Clement, and be clothed with the robe of assurance (or certainty) so that thou mayest behold the hosts of confirmation from thy Lord arising from all sides. (Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá v3, p. 650)

We detach when we shun those whose hearts are turned away from God:

Take heed that thou resign not the reins of the affairs of thy state into the hands of others, and repose not thy confidence in ministers unworthy of thy trust, and be not of them that live in heedlessness. Shun them whose hearts are turned away from thee, and place not thy confidence in them, and entrust them not with thine affairs and the affairs of such as profess thy faith. Beware that thou allow not the wolf to become the shepherd of God's flock, and surrender not the fate of His loved ones to the mercy of the malicious. Expect not that they who violate the ordinances of God will be trustworthy or sincere in the faith they profess. Avoid them, and preserve strict guard over thyself, lest their devices and mischief hurt thee. Turn away from them, and fix thy gaze upon God, thy Lord, the All-Glorious, the Most Bountiful. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, CXIV, p. 233)

We detach when we wash away every trace of pride:

He must never seek to exalt himself above any one, must wash away from the tablet of his heart every trace of pride and vain-glory, must cling unto patience and resignation, observe silence and refrain from idle talk. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 264-265)

We detach when we appreciate all things, good and bad:

Therefore we must be happy and pass our time in praises, appreciating all things. But there is something else: detachment. We can appreciate without attaching ourselves to the things of this world. It sometimes happens that if a man loses his

fortune he is so disheartened that he dies or becomes insane. While enjoying the things of this world we must remember that one day we shall have to do without them. Attach not thyself to anything unless in it thou seest the reality of God - this is the first step into the court of eternity. The earth life lasts but a short time, even its benefits are transitory; that which is temporary does not deserve our heart's attachment. Material favors sometimes deprive us of spiritual favors and material rest of spiritual rest. (Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, pp. 134-135)

We detach when we quench the enmity and hatred which smoulders in our hearts:

Now is the moment in which to cleanse thyself with the waters of detachment that have flowed out from the Supreme Pen, and to ponder, wholly for the sake of God, those things which, time and again, have been sent down or manifested, and then to strive, as much as lieth in thee, to quench, through the power of wisdom and the force of thy utterance, the fire of enmity and hatred which smouldereth in the hearts of the peoples of the world. (Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 12)

We detach when we lift up our voices and proclaim His Cause:

Arise in the name of Him Who is the Object of all knowledge, and, with absolute detachment from the learning of men, lift up your voices and proclaim His Cause. I swear by the Day Star of Divine Revelation! The very moment ye arise, ye will witness how a flood of Divine knowledge will gush out of your hearts, and will behold the wonders of His heavenly wisdom manifested in all their glory before you. Were ye to taste of the sweetness of the sayings of the All-Merciful, ye would unhesitatingly forsake your selves, and would lay down your lives for the Well-Beloved. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, XXXV, pp. 84-85)

We detach when we renounce the world and all that is therein:

Whoso followeth his Lord, will renounce the world and all that is therein; how much greater, then, must be the detachment of Him Who holdeth so august a station! Forsake your palaces, and haste ye to gain admittance into His Kingdom. This, indeed, will profit you both in this world and in the next. To this testifieth the Lord of the realm on high, did ye but know it. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, CV, p. 212)

We detach when we stop meddling with the activities of those who are the world's outward leaders:

Forbear ye from concerning yourselves with the affairs of this world and all that pertaineth unto it, or from meddling with the activities of those who are its outward leaders. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, CXV, p. 241)

We detach when we let the flame of the love of God burn brightly within our radiant hearts:

O My servants! Deprive not yourselves of the unfading and resplendent Light that shineth within the Lamp of Divine glory. Let the flame of the love of God burn brightly within your radiant hearts. Feed it with the oil of Divine guidance, and protect it within the shelter of your constancy. Guard it within the globe of trust and detachment from all else but God, so that the evil whisperings of the ungodly may not extinguish its light. (Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, CLIII, pp. 325-326)

We detach when we rid ourselves of all attachment to any one save God:

I give praise to Thee, O my God, that the fragrance of Thy loving-kindness hath enraptured me, and the gentle winds of Thy mercy have inclined me in the direction of Thy bountiful favors. Make me to quaff, O my Lord, from the fingers of Thy bounteousness the living waters which have enabled every one that hath partaken of them to rid himself of all attachment to any one save Thee, and to soar into the atmosphere of detachment from all Thy creatures, and to fix his gaze upon Thy loving providence and Thy manifold gifts. (Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh, CL, p. 240)

We detach when our motives are pure:

Let them perform their services with complete sanctity and detachment, and on no account defile themselves by receiving bribes, harbouring unseemly motives, or engaging in noxious practices. 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 beseemeth only the foolish. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, The Compilation of Compilations vol II, p. 345, #2072)

...all these sacrifices are meritorious in the sight of God and will undoubtedly bring victory to His Cause, provided one's motives are pure and sincere. That is the essential condition of loyalty and steadfastness in the Covenant of God—purity of motive. Without it one's deeds are not acceptable by God. (Adib Taherzadeh, The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 23-24)

We detach when we ponder God's words:

In like manner, those words that have streamed forth from the source of power and descended from the heaven of glory are innumerable and beyond the ordinary comprehension of man. To them that are possessed of true understanding and insight the Surah of Hud surely sufficeth. Ponder a while those holy words in your heart, and, with utter detachment, strive to grasp their meaning. (Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitáb-i-Íqán, p. 5)

We detach when we don't depend on circumstances to make us happy:

The people of God have no dependence upon the conditions of this world; they neither become bittered with the bitterness of the cup, nor do they become intoxicated if the cup be sweet. (Compilations, Bahá'í Scriptures, p. 501)

We detach when we're not troubled by current events:

Yet, in spite of being so occupied [with work], if the heart is not chained and tied to this world, and is not troubled by current events, neither hindered by wealth from rendering service to mankind, nor grieved because of poverty, - then this is human perfection. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, The Compilation of Compilations vol II, p. 4, #16)

Here is a checklist you can use when thinking about the things you want to let go.

Our Relationship to God

1. turn our face towards the courts of the Lord
2. recognize and love God
3. attach our hearts to God
4. advance towards God
5. turn to the things that belong to God
6. live in accordance with the teachings of God
7. seek God's pleasure and not our own
8. trust God
9. be faithful to God
10. put our reliance on the remembrance of God
11. take firm hold on the precepts of God
12. rid ourselves of all attachment to any one save God
13. cling to God
14. stand as witness before God
15. expect no help or aid from anyone but God
16. supplicate and invoke God
17. beseech God that nothing will tarnish the purity or embitter the sweetness of the grace which flows through us
18. let the flame of the love of God burn brightly within our radiant hearts
19. reflect the love of God on all men
20. Stop doing anything that will deter us from beholding God's face, or tempt us to follow the promptings of our evil and corrupt inclinations
21. turn to His Messengers

Imitation

22. turn away from imitation and following the traces of our forefathers
23. strip ourselves of old beliefs and past customs
24. turn away from ancestral imitations and investigate reality
25. cast away the veils of idle learning that are current amongst men

Possessions

26. get rid of all desires
27. ignore mortal riches
28. stop letting our possessions possess us
29. strip ourselves of the imperfections of the material world
30. renounce the world and all that is therein

Prayer and Meditation

31. rely on prayer
32. ponder God's words
33. use the Hidden Words

Relationships

34. quench the enmity and hatred which smoulders in our hearts
35. shun those whose hearts are turned away from God
36. stop meddling with the activities of those who are the world's outward leaders

Thoughts

37. separate ourselves from all thoughts
38. turn away from idle fancies and vain imaginings
39. turn away from satanic promptings
40. turn away from ideas which degrade the human soul
41. wash away every trace of pride
42. don't depend on circumstances to make us happy
43. be untroubled by current events

Virtues

44. seek distinction in the pursuit of virtue and excellence
45. have pure and sincere motives
46. appreciate all things, good and bad

Work, Teach and Serve

47. engage in a profession and are self-supporting
48. dedicate our lives for His service
49. make all of our personal and material interests revolve around the Faith
50. offer up our time, serve in a locality, give up the comforts of home, go pioneering, teach, be persecuted and even give up our lives
51. give up the important for the most important
52. use our interests in promoting spiritual pursuits

53. teach
54. lift up our voices and proclaim His Cause

Other

55. embrace tests and suffering
56. use our eyes and ears
57. shut our eyes to rest, quietude and the mortal life

Conclusion

Detachment doesn't come easily, however. It can be painful and time-consuming:

To rid oneself of these attachments is not easy. It can be a painful process and may indeed prove to be a spiritual battle which lasts a lifetime. (Adib Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Baha'u'llah* v 1, p. 77)

It can involve sacrifice:

Becoming detached from the things of this world is often a painful process and involves sacrifice. (Adib Taherzadeh, *The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 23)

And perseverance:

His chief advice to you is perseverance without which, he strongly feels, no success is attainable. The difficulties in your way are undoubtedly manifold and not always easy to overcome. But provided you persevere, and face with courage, full faith and confidence such obstacles you can be sure of attaining the goal you have set yourselves to achieve. Now is the beginning of your work. And as in the beginning of every task you are bound to meet all sorts of difficulties. The more you strive to overcome these, the greater will be your reward, and the nearer you will get to that glorious success which, as repeatedly promised by Bahá'u'lláh, must needs crown the efforts of all those who, whole-heartedly and with pure detachment, strive to work for the spread and establishment of His Cause. (Shoghi Effendi, *The Unfolding Destiny of the British Bahá'í Community*, p. 107)

And patience:

To sever oneself from the Kingdom of Names may prove to be the most difficult task for a Bahá'í, and the struggle may indeed last a lifetime. (Adib Taherzadeh, *The Covenant of Baha'u'llah*, p. 26)

But if we can achieve it, the benefits are many!