

How Wealth Can Benefit the World

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Every nation on Earth wants and needs one thing for its citizens: jobs. Every one of us needs to engage in productive, paying work.

The Baha'i teachings don't make any exceptions to that rule:

There are no solitaries and no hermits among the Baha'is. Man must work with his fellows. Everyone should have some trade, or art or profession, be he rich or poor, and with this he must serve humanity. This service is acceptable as the highest form of worship. – Abdu'l-Baha, *Abdu'l-Baha in London*, p. 93.

... it is incumbent upon all mankind to become fitted for some useful trade, craft or profession by which subsistence may be assured, and this efficiency is to be considered as an act of worship. – Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 434.

Of course, we all want meaningful jobs that pay well, although different jobs pay different wages, thank goodness, for employee skills are not the same. Even from like business to like business, salaries will differ because job scopes differ. Abdu'l-Baha wrote:

Now, the differences among mankind are twofold: One is a difference of degree, and this difference is not blameworthy. The other is a difference with respect to faith and certitude, the absence of which is blameworthy; for the soul must have fallen prey to its own lusts and passions to have been deprived of this bounty and bereft of the attractive power of the love of God. However praiseworthy and acceptable it may be in its human degree, yet as it is deprived of the perfections of that degree, it has become a source of deficiency and is held accountable for that reason. – *Some Answered Questions*, newly revised edition, p. 148.

This "difference of degree," in our skills, talents and abilities, that "is not blameworthy," rests on our education, background and experience. We're all different. When applying for a job sitting in

front of an interviewer (if we're fortunate enough to have a face-to-face or Skype interview), a lot rests on our preferably one-page resume or completed application. That fits most jobs. Higher paying jobs require more, a two-page resume or perhaps a video of the candidate explaining and answering, "What can you bring to our company?" After the basics are shared, that's usually the first question from any able interviewer.

When a job candidate proves his or her worth and potential value, they're hired. The new employer takes a chance on us, and we usually go through a probationary period. After that point forward it's up to us to perform for our company, organization or enterprise honestly and productively, on time and cooperatively with others, and then some. If starting our own business, the purpose is to be successful enough to not only get by, but to make a good profit, or even better, a great and fair profit. But monetary success isn't the measure of good jobs:

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. All around us today we see how man surrounds himself with every modern convenience and luxury, and denies nothing to the physical and material side of his nature. But, take heed, lest in thinking too earnestly of the things of the body you forget the things of the soul: for material advantages do not elevate the spirit of a man. Perfection in worldly things is a joy to the body of a man but in no wise does it glorify his soul. – Abdu'l-Baha, *Paris Talks*, pp. 62-63.

Sure, we all want to increase our physical well-being and obtain ease and comfort. That's the natural right of every human being, and God has created the world and all the natural wealth in it to provide that to us. However, we have not distributed that wealth well at all, since we have hundreds of billionaires and billions earning less than a few dollars per day, or nothing. That needs to change. In order for it to change, we must find ways to allow every person to be successful. For that to happen, we need a fair and just society. To have that, we must have individuals who exemplify fairness and justice. In other words, we must first re-create our souls to have a just and perfect society where everyone can have the opportunity to thrive. Justice, of course, doesn't mean absolute equality. People are different, and their jobs will fit their different levels of ability and ambition. There is nothing wrong with wealth, the Baha'i teachings say—in fact, wealth is praiseworthy if it is earned in service to others and expended on the poor.

How can this happen? On a personal level, a high sense of moral rectitude must be inculcated into every living human being. Education and religion help bring that about. Knowledge is truth; religion is truth, and the truth will set us free, not only to achieve our comfort and happiness but the comfort, happiness and prosperity of all.

Addressing the world's Baha'is, the Universal House of Justice wrote:

Let them never forget the imperative to tend to the needs of the children of the world and offer them lessons that develop their spiritual faculties and lay the foundations of a noble and upright character. Let them come to realize the full significance of their efforts to help young people

form a strong moral identity in their early adolescent years and empower them to contribute to the well-being of their communities. – 20 October 2008, To the Baha'is of the World.

We all know this, quite well. Everything starts—jobs, our own well-being and the welfare of society—with the truthful, moral education of children, teens and young adults. What are you doing to make that happen?