

Virtue Workshop

Children, Youth and Adults Learning Together

Printable resources are included

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Identity and Purpose: “Being” and “Doing”

General Introduction

This Material is designed for workshops/conferences, children’s classes, families, and individual learning.

Unless we can make deep spiritual concepts understandable, we risk losing future generations to the distorted thinking of a deteriorating materialistic world..

Each spiritual concept explored includes activities specifically designed for groups of youth and adults and activities designed for children.

It is a method of group learning, based on the model of the oneness of humanity.

Everyone is a student, and everyone is a teacher. Our mission is not to provide exhaustive research and explanation of concepts for scholars. Our goal is to enable everyone to gain a basic knowledge of concepts indispensable for spiritual survival.

It is our hope that parents and teachers gathered in living rooms, backyards; in cities and villages, will use these spiritual concepts to improve the lives of children, youth and adults.

The writers, as members of the Baha’i Faith, are guided by its teachings and principles. We have used language that allows the concepts to be accessible to the wider community. Reference is made to the sources of authority of the Bahá’í Faith. We are referring to the Báb, Bahá’u’lláh, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice.

This material reflects the personal interpretations of the authors and should not be taken as authoritative.

Instructions

Materials listed in the Resource section of each activity, including images, should be carefully prepared. Images can be enlarged and are essential for presentation. If some of the materials listed are not available, facilitators may modify and adapt material to best meet the unique needs of different groups.

Activities for youth/adults may be completed in approximately one hour.

Activities for children are approximately twenty minutes to an hour in length.

Adult Activity 1

Document with text to be read aloud by participants. Facilitator may choose to use a projector.

Materials in Resource Section

Facilitator says: We are going to consider the interconnected concepts of “being” and “doing”. First, let’s look at the concept of “being”. Being is who we are. We can’t understand the concept of being unless we know our true reality as a soul.

In the world religions of the past, individuals were referred to as a spirit or soul without much explanation as to what a spirit or soul is or does. Muhammad, the Manifestation of God, previous to Bahá'u'lláh, said: ‘They ask thee concerning the spirit...But you have no knowledge given unto you except a little.’ -*Quran*: Q17:87.

In the Bible people were called “souls” or “spirits”. Again, there was little explanation of what the powers and faculties of a soul or spirit were. The reasons have everything to do with the capacity of humanity and not the capacity of the Prophets.

Every Prophet of God is all-knowing. What They share is determined by the requirements of the age in which They appear.

Facilitator asks: participant to read the following two quotations in a loud voice:

The words of Jesus Christ confirm this; “I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now”. *Bible*: John 16:12

Every Prophet Whom the Almighty and Peerless Creator hath purposed to send to the peoples of the earth hath been entrusted with a Message, and charged to act in a manner that would best meet the requirements of the age in which He appeared.

- Bahá'í Reference Library: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*: XXXIV

Facilitator says: Before the coming of Abraham, there was widespread belief in a multitude of gods. His father made a living by carving stone and wooden gods that people worshiped in their homes. Beginning with Abraham, the principle that there is only one God was established. The world is now primarily monotheistic. The Religions of the past, brought by the Manifestations of God, left incredible civilizations in their wake. They achieved this through Their laws and Their personal example that defined proper human behavior. However, explaining the reality of soul and spirit to their followers was premature.

This is a new day and the time is right to find out who we are (Being) and what is our purpose (Doing). The Bahá'í Writings clearly define our identity and purpose as a servant of God. We are consistently referred to as servants of God in a Bahá'í prayer: **“Is there any Remover of difficulties save God? Say: Praised be God! He is God! All are His servants, and all abide by His bidding!”**

- The Báb, Bahá'í Reference Library: *Bahá'í Prayers/Tests and Difficulties*

Let's read this statement on being and doing:

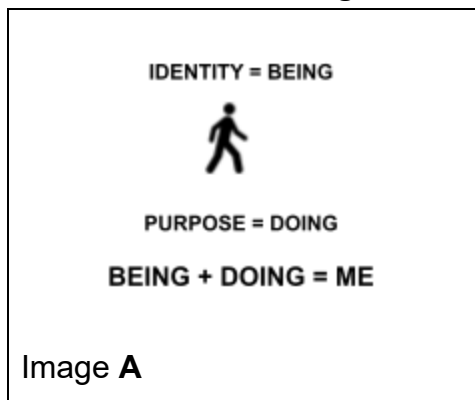
Facilitator asks: participant to read quotation in a loud voice:

“The importance of “doing”, of arising to serve and to accompany fellow souls, must be harmonized with the notion of “being” of increasing one’s understanding of the divine teachings and mirroring forth spiritual qualities in one’s life.”

-Universal House of Justice, *Letter to the Conference of the Continental Boards of Counselors*, 29 December 2015

Facilitator says: If we are “servants” then we must also be “doing” something to serve. A servant of God is a combination of identity (being) and purpose (doing). If we separate the elements of “being” and “doing” then we lose touch with who we are. This means we lose touch with our own reality.

Facilitator shares image A with participants



Facilitator says: We have always been servants of God. This is neither a new identity nor a new purpose. The question is: “What has changed? The answer to that question is related to the appearance of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. He is a perfect model of what it means to be a servant of God. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is a unique figure in the history of creation. There has never before been an ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Without His example, we would not know how to live: who we should **be** and what we should **do**.

There are many well known stories about how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá fed and clothed the poor throughout His life -- in some cases giving someone the clothes He was wearing. Here is one story not generally known:

Facilitator asks: a participant to read in a loud voice:

“In a final touching tribute to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s generosity this true story emerged in the 1990s, some 70 years after ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s passing. The Universal House of Justice, the supreme governing Council of the Bahá’í world community, announced a major construction project on Mount Carmel, Haifa, of buildings that would, at last, meet the commands of Bahá’u’lláh, the Founder. Accordingly, a tender was put out for Israeli construction companies to bid for, and a public call for engineers was made by the House of Justice. To everyone’s astonishment, a large number of Arab engineers emerged from the greater Haifa area offering their services. When the bemused Bahá’í s asked them why they had come forward they all said: “The Master, Abbas Effendi(‘Abdu’l-Bahá) gave our grandparents and great-grandparents money to start small businesses. Our family businesses prospered and our families were able to pay for our school and university education. We are here to give something back to Abbas Effendi.”

-Extract from, *“A Presentation on the Centenary of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Visit to the United Kingdom in 1911”*. Given on 10th september 2011 in Bourne Hall, Ewell Village, Surrey, by Trevor R.J. Finch.

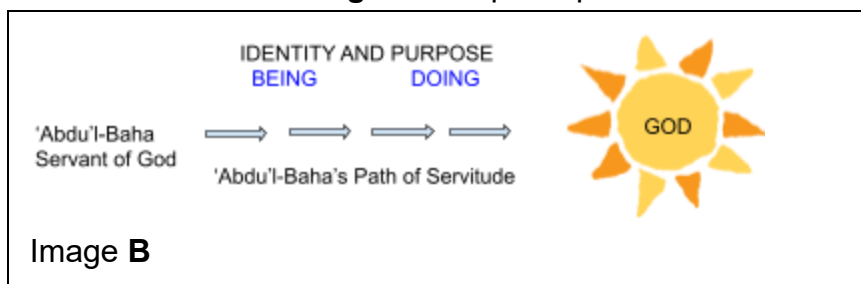
Facilitator says: Annamaie Honold shares another story of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s generosity:

“A friend had sent some fur so that the Master could have a good warm coat; He had it cut up and made into twenty caps for the elderly men of the town.”

-*Vignettes from the Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* p.15

Without His example, we would not know how to live: who we should **be** and what we should **do**.

Facilitator shares: Image B with participants



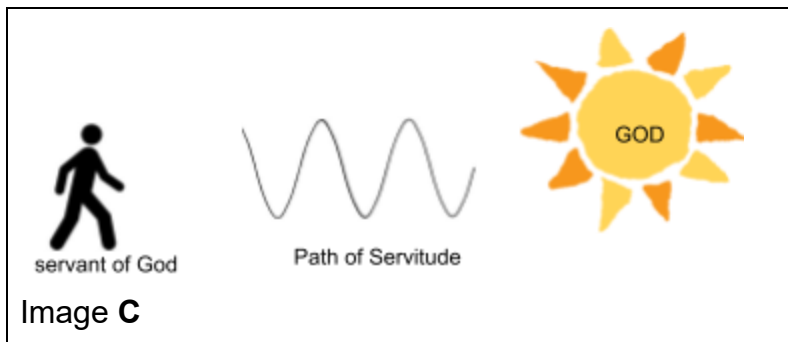
Facilitator says: In ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, we have someone who perfectly integrated His identity and purpose --- His being and doing.

Facilitator asks: participant to read the following in a loud voice:

“The duty of the People of Baha is to tread the path of servitude to the Divine Threshold...” -Universal House of Justice *Letter* 1997

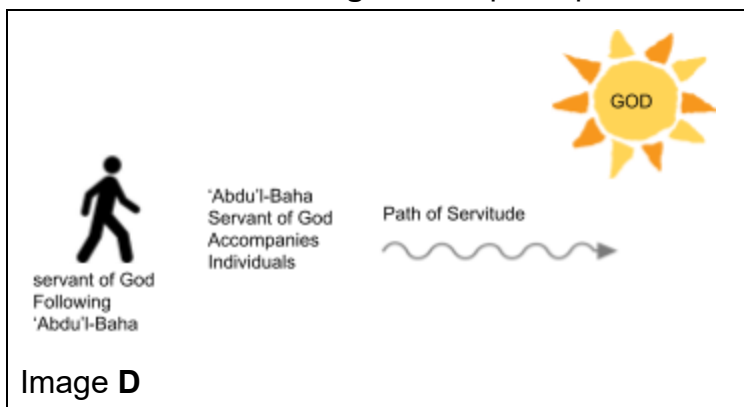
Facilitator says: You will notice that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s path is perfectly straight. Unlike ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, we will always make mistakes and corrections. This is how humans learn. We go off the path and get back on the path.

Facilitator shares: Image C with participants



Facilitator says: Notice in this illustration that the individual’s path is not straight as they journey towards God. This is symbolic of the human condition. We all make mistakes on a daily basis and we always will. The simple goal is to make fewer and less dangerous mistakes.

Facilitator shares: Image D with participants



Facilitator says: Notice in this illustration the individual is accompanied by the example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. We can make better choices if we follow 'Abdu'l-Bahá on the path of servitude.

Now our path of servitude has less severe ups and downs. However, it is not and never will be perfectly straight.

Let's look at what happens when the two facets of our identity---being and doing are not connected and not working together.

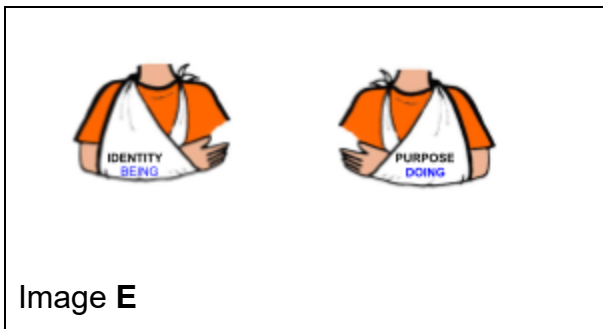
We need two volunteers who will let us immobilize one arm.

Two participant volunteers come forward

Facilitator places: one sling on the left arm of one participant and one sling on the right arm of the other participant.

Facilitator attaches adhesive paper labels - one to each sling: "IDENTITY/BEING" and "PURPOSE/DOING"

Facilitator shares: image E with participants



Facilitator: places medium-sized table in front of the two volunteers.



Image is for Facilitator reference

Facilitator asks: the “**Being**” volunteer (person with Doing arm in sling): Now try with one arm to pick up this table and keep it level.

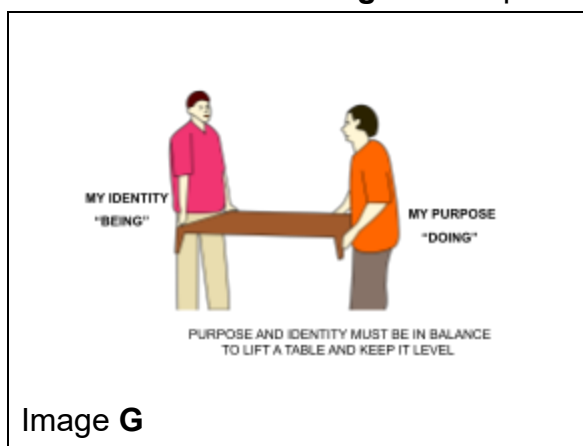
Participant is unsuccessful at keeping table level.

Facilitator says: to the “**Doing**” (person with Being arm in sling) volunteer: Now Try, with one arm, to pick up this table and keep it level.

Participant is unsuccessful at keeping table level.

Facilitator says: For the average person this would be physically impossible to do. We need both arms to lift the table and keep it level. We need to be conscious of keeping our identity -- our **being** and purpose -- our **doing** in a **level balance** so our lives will be in balance.

Facilitator: shares: Image G with participants



Facilitator’s closing remarks : In the balanced table illustration the two individuals are in balance. This image represents a balance between the “identity” -- “being” and “purpose” -- “doing”.

Knowing that we are all servants of God means our relationships also need to be in balance. We need a balance between our ability to give and our ability to receive.

If we only serve ourselves, we become selfish. And, if we only serve others, we lose our sense of self. Again, maintaining a balance is very important in every aspect of life. We also need to allow others to fulfill their potential by letting them serve us. At the same time we are developing our receiving skills.

To the Facilitator and all participants:

Facilitator says: The physical world has been created by God to teach us deep spiritual concepts. It is the hope of the creators of this activity that we all make the transition as quickly as possible, from being student participants, to being teachers, sharing these ideas with others. Spiritual concepts are the building blocks for an ever-progressing world civilization.

Please feel free to adapt this material to best meet the unique needs of different groups.

Adult Activity 2

Document with text to be read aloud by participants. Facilitator may choose to use a projector.

Materials in Resource Section

Facilitator says: There is a difference between who we are and what we do.

Facilitator shares: Image H with participants

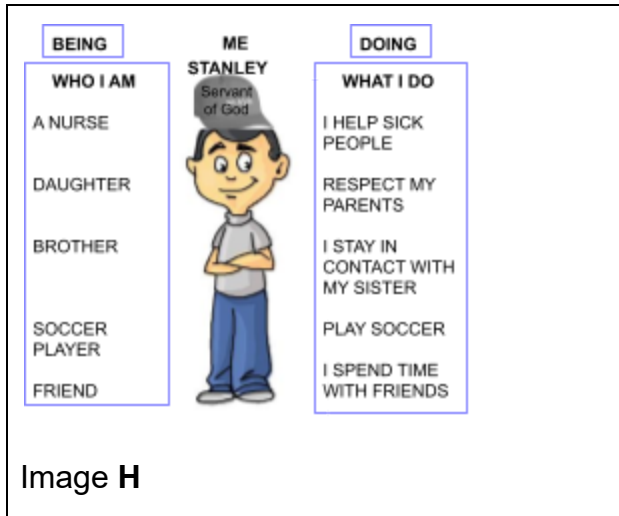


Image H

Facilitator says: while reviewing poster:

For example, a part of **Who I Am** is a nurse. A part of **What I Do** is help sick people. A part of **who** I am is “a daughter”. A part of **what** I do is “respect my parents”. A part of **who** I am is “a brother”. A part of **what** I do is “stay in contact with my sister”. A part of **who** I am is “a soccer player”. A part of **what** I do is “play soccer”.

Facilitator introduces: blank poster/board.

Facilitator says:

Let's divide this board in half. Let's label the left side “**Who I Am - Being**” and the right side “**What I Do - Doing**”

Facilitator: writes labels on board

Facilitator says: Now pair up with someone next to you.

Facilitator gives four sticky notes and a pen to each pair of participants

Facilitator says: Think of “Who I Am” and “What I Do” pairs. Write the “Who I Am” on one sticky note and the “What I Do” on the other sticky note.

Participants talk and complete sticky note pairs

Facilitator asks: participants to share their responses with the whole group

Allow 3 minutes for group sharing

Facilitator says: Will each paired team come up and attach their notes to the “Who I Am” and the “What I do” side of the board?

Participants respond

Facilitator asks: What did we learn about ourselves from this activity?

Participants respond

Facilitator’s closing remarks: As servants of God, we will always be more than just the sum of our parts. No matter what happens to us in our lives, our identity as a servant of God should never change.

The realization that we are servants of God is the foundation for our physical, mental and spiritual stability.

We may work at one job for many years and then we stop.

Or, technology may have changed the nature of our job and we are unable to adapt.

It is common for people to feel lost. We struggle to know who we are now. Our

“temporary work identity” is no more.

- A soccer player may injure their knee and can’t play anymore. He wasn’t prepared to stop playing. His “temporary soccer player identity” has disappeared in the blink of an eye. He must now find a new career or hobby.
- A mother may feel devastated when her children grow up and become independent. The long relationship of caregiving and dependence changes. She now needs to interact with her children as independent adults.
- A man’s wife may die. He has to realize that they were always two separate people, not one. The physical part of the relationship has ended but their spiritual relationship is eternal.

In these stressful moments, we can mistake a **temporary state of affairs** as a permanent condition. These are the most dangerous times in our lives. We must continually remind ourselves that no event and no person can take away our true, **eternal** identity as a servant of God. No one can take it away unless we let them. The most important lesson to be learned is that we are all servants of God. This identity which is a combination of who we are (being) and what we do (doing) never ends.

To the Facilitator and all participants:

Facilitator says: The physical world has been created by God to teach us deep spiritual concepts. It is the hope of the creators of this activity that we all make the transition as quickly as possible, from being student participants, to being teachers, sharing these ideas with others. Spiritual concepts are the building blocks for an ever-progressing world civilization.

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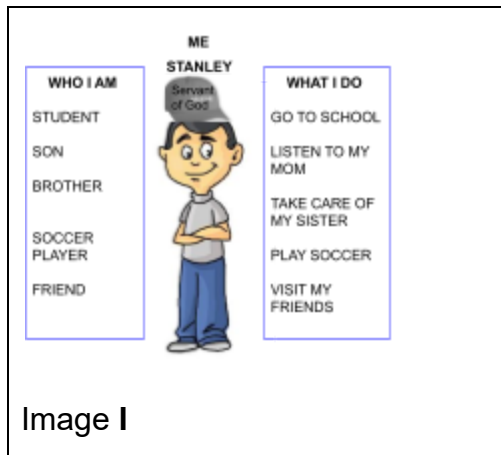
Children's Activity

Document with text to be read aloud by participants. Facilitator may choose to use a projector.

Materials in Resource Section

***Note to Facilitator:** We want our children to grow up knowing how to integrate their identity (being -- who they are) with their purpose (doing -- what they do).

Facilitator introduces poster **Image I** to participants



Facilitator says: Here is Stanley. Let's look at who Stanley is and what Stanley does.

Of course there is a difference between who we are and what we do. For example:

Who We Are is friends. **What We Do** is play together.

Facilitator says, while pointing to corresponding text on poster:

Stanley is a combination of WHO HE IS -- HIS "BEING" and WHAT HE DOES -- HIS "DOING".

Stanley is a **student** ... who **goes to school**.

Stanley is a **son** ... who **listens to his mother**.

Stanley is a **brother** ... who **takes care of his sister**.

Stanley is a **soccer player** ... who **plays soccer**.

Stanley is a **friend** ... who **visits his friends**

Who he is + what he does = Stanley

Who I am + what I do = Me

Now we will create one big poster for our group of **who we are** and **what we do**.

Facilitator introduces a large poster board.

Facilitator draws line down the center of board

Facilitator says: Who are we? Let's make two lists: Let's make a list for **WHO I AM** and a list of **WHAT I DO**.

Let's label the left side "Who I am".

Let's label the right side "What I do"

Facilitator writes labels on board

Facilitator demonstrates: I will start with me. I am a musician. I will write that on the "who I am" side.

What I do as a musician is play the flute. I will write that on the "what I do" side.

Facilitator blows on flute

Facilitator says: I play the flute but I am not the flute.

I like to collect things. I will write that on the "who I am" side. What I do is collect colorful rocks. I will write that on the "what I do" side.

***Note to Facilitator: There are two activity options depending on age of children:**

Activity for younger children:

***For small group of children:**

Facilitator says: Everyone will have a turn. When it is your turn, you will take a pair of cards. You will read both of them and decide which card belongs on the "who I am" side of the board and which one belongs on the "what I do" side of the board. Then you will attach your cards to the board. I will help read the cards if you need me to.

*** Alternate grouping for more than 10 children:**

If there is a larger number of participants, children may be divided into teams of two.

Facilitator says: We will divide into pairs of two. Each pair will receive a "who I am" card and a "what I do" card". Each pair should consult together and attach their cards to appropriate sides of the board.

Facilitator gives: one child the “who I am” card of the paired set and gives the other child the “what I do” card.

*More being - doing card pairs can be created to match the number of children

Participants complete activity

Activity for older children:

Facilitator says: Everyone will receive one card -- either a “who I am” card or a “what I do” card. We will read what is on our card and then walk around and find the person who has the other matching half of our pair. Then we will sit with our partner, holding onto our cards.

Participants respond

Facilitator says: Now that everyone has found the other half of their pair, each team will first tell the group what is on their “who I am” card and then tell us what is on their “what I do” card. Then they will attach their cards to either the correct sides of the board.

Participants respond

Facilitator says: Of course, **who we are** is not just someone who loves to play games or draw pictures. We are also children who love our families, friends and God. And **what we do** is try to help and serve our families, friends and God.

We may hurt our ankle and not be able to play soccer for a while. The library may be closed this weekend and I can't get the next book in my favorite series.

No matter what happens to us each day, we are always able to love and serve people and serve God. Each and every day we will always be servants of God!

Facilitator asks: participant to come forward

Facilitator says: We are going to put this special hat on you.

It is labeled “Servant of God”. This is a permanent label. You will always be a servant of God. That never changes. What we do each day changes. Each day we do different things at different times. We will attach different labels that can change.

For example: You are going outside playing soccer with your friends.

So we will attach the “What I Do” ... soccer player label to your hat.

But then your mom calls you for lunch.

You take off the soccer player label and ...

We will now attach the “What I Do” ... eating lunch label to your hat.

Then it is time to feed the animals.

You take off the eating lunch label and we attach the “What I Do” ... feed the animals label.

Facilitator invites another participant to come forward. The “servant of God” hat is placed on this participant.

Facilitator asks: what are some things you do each day?

Participant responds

Facilitator says: I will write some of these activities you say you like to do on “What I do” labels.

Now we will attach one of your labels to your hat. You do more than one thing each day. So we will have to take this label off and replace it with another activity you do. We change “What we Do” but we never change that we are a servant of God.

Facilitator attaches a label to hat of participant

Repeat activity with other participants as time allows

Additional activity for older children:

Card game “Go Fish”, played by two or more players. A set of “who I am” and “what I do” cards are given to each team

Players take an equal number of cards.

*For younger children, one side of the cards may be labeled as either “who I am” or “what I do”

Facilitator says: This is how we play “Go Fish”: Each player, one at a time, turns to the person to their right. They say what is on one of their cards and request its match. for example: “I have a ‘what I do’ card - I go fishing with my mom. Do you have a ‘who I am’ matching card?” If the player being asked has the matching card, they say “I have the ‘who I am’ matching card - ‘I like to fish’”. They give this card to the requesting player. The game continues with each player taking turns to request matching cards from person to their right. Whichever player collects the most pairs wins.

Resources:

Adult Activity 1

Materials:

Two cloth arm slings
Adhesive paper labels
Mid-size table
Images **A,B,C,D,E,G**

Adult Activity 2

Materials:

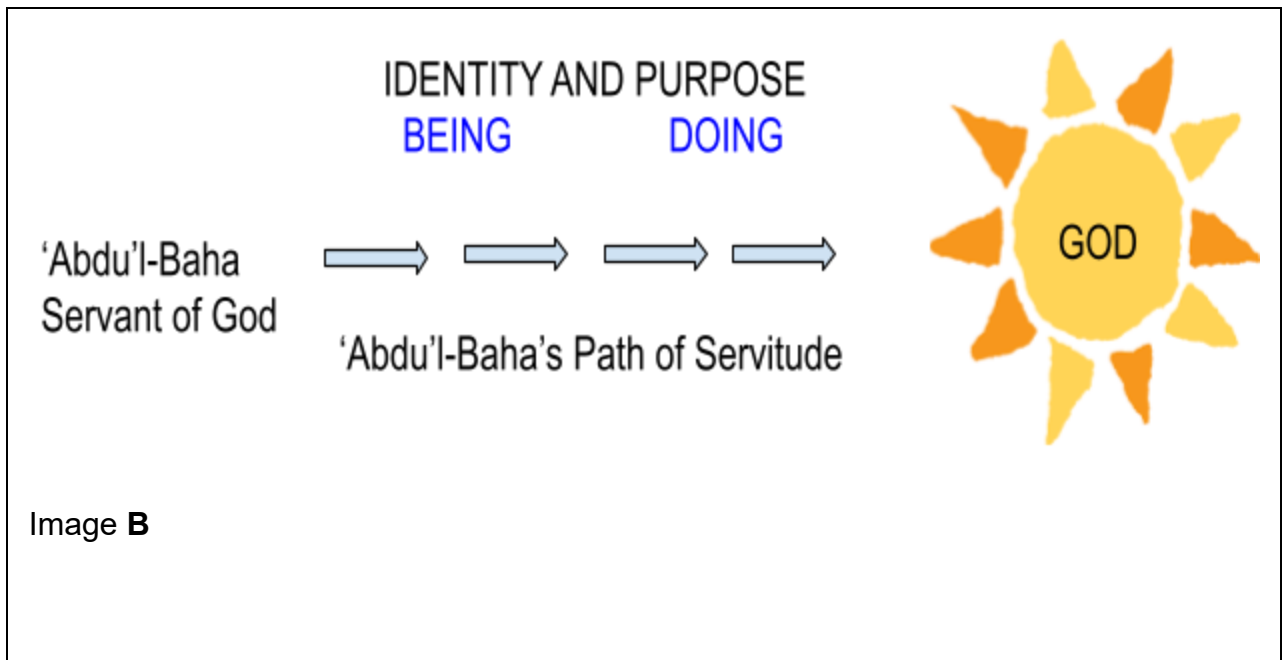
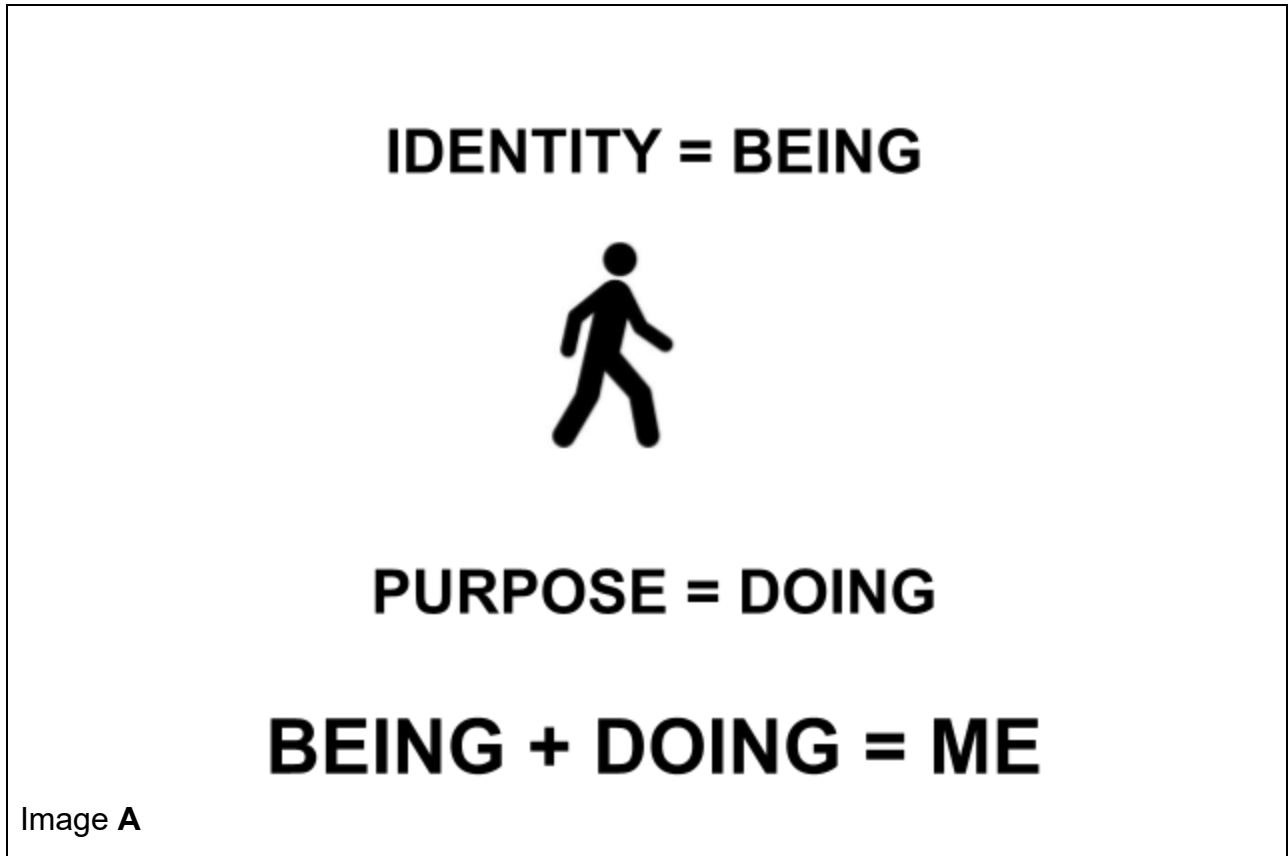
Image **H** - Enlarge image if possible or draw chart. Attach to cardboard or place on easel.
Large blank poster, whiteboard or wooden board
Paper sticky notes (blank cards and tape may be used in place of sticky notes)
Pens - one for each team of two people. (optional: one color pen for “being” and one color pen for “doing”)

Children’s Activity

Materials:

Image **I** - Enlarge image if possible or draw on chart. Attach to cardboard or place on easel.
Large blank poster board
“Who we are” and “What we Do” card pairs
Simple toy flute if available
Cap with visor
Adhesive mailing labels
marker

Images:



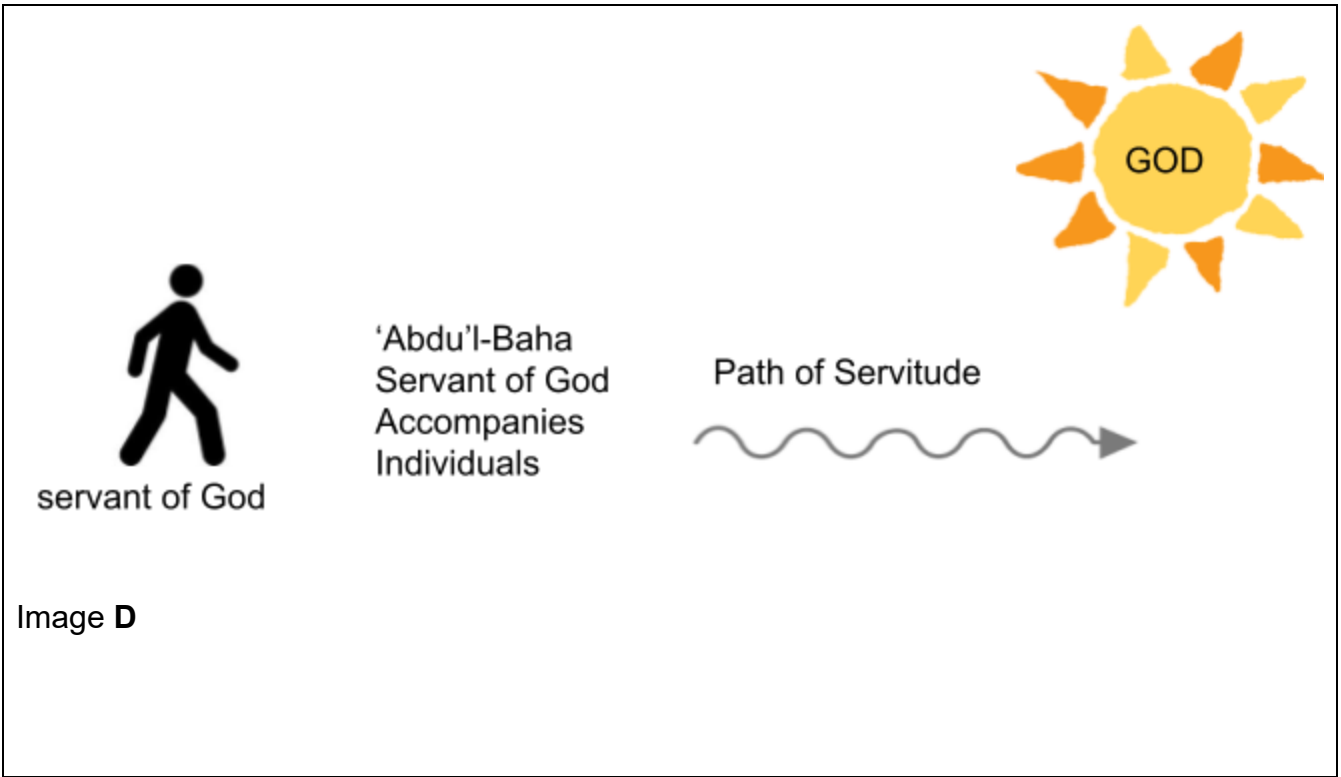
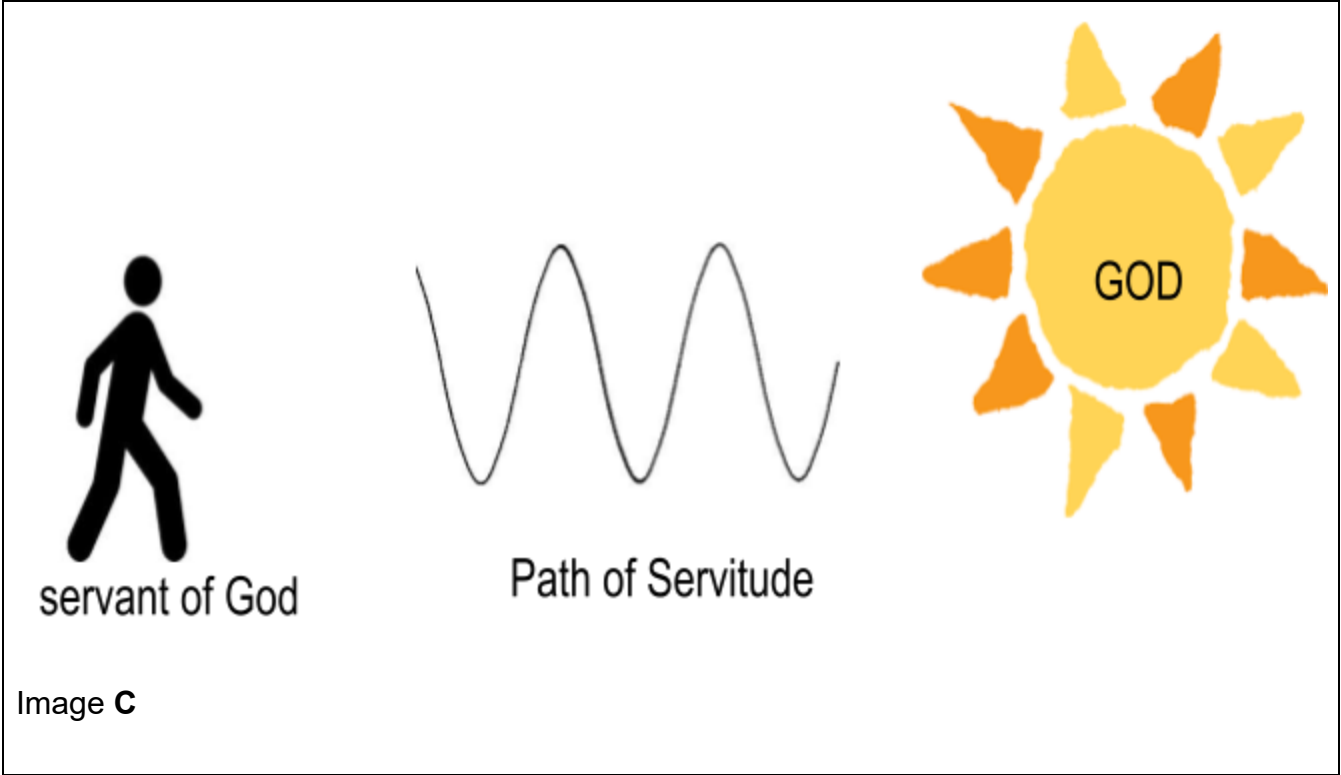




Image E



PURPOSE AND IDENTITY MUST BE IN BALANCE
TO LIFT A TABLE AND KEEP IT LEVEL

Image G

BEING

WHO I AM

A NURSE

DAUGHTER

BROTHER

SOCCER
PLAYER

FRIEND

**ME
STANLEY**



DOING

WHAT I DO

I HELP SICK
PEOPLE

RESPECT MY
PARENTS

I STAY IN
CONTACT WITH
MY SISTER

PLAY SOCCER

I SPEND TIME
WITH FRIENDS

Image H

ME

STANLEY



WHO I AM

STUDENT

SON

SISTER

SOCCER
PLAYER

FRIEND

WHAT I DO

GO TO SCHOOL

LISTEN TO MY
MOM

TAKE CARE OF
MY SISTER

PLAY SOCCER

VISIT MY
FRIENDS

Image 1

Card Pairs:

“Who I am”

“What I do”

I love to hike
I like to see things grow
I am artistic
I love to write
I love to read
I like to fish
I like playing games
I like music
I like to dance
I like sports

I climb up a mountain with dad
I plant a garden
I draw pictures
I write stories
I go to the library
I go fishing with mom
I play games with my friend
I am learning the piano
I go to dance class
I play kickball in my yard

Cards

I love to hike	I climb up a mountain with dad
I like to see things grow	I plant a garden
I am artistic	I draw pictures
I love to write	I write stories

I love to read	I go to the library

I like to fish	I go fishing with mom
I like playing games	I play games with my friend
I like music	I am learning the piano
I like to dance	I go to dance class
I like sports	I play kickball in my yard

