

Study Groups: Actualities and Potentialities—The Glorious Good News

DAVID E GLASS
USA

Plenary presentation held at the Study Group Symposium, Edgewood College, Madison, Wisconsin USA on June 12, 2014.



Symposium promotional announcement

**Awesome!
Astounding!
Sensational!.....
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this same initial,
breath-taking
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for themselves...**

GOOD MORNING, EVERYONE, AND MY sincerest brotherly regards to each of you sons and daughters of God assembled here today—you are my brothers and sisters, *freres et soeurs, hermanos y hermanas, Bruder und Schwestern*, in the Father’s family of everlasting life and divine love. And you are my partners in the grand project of promoting and enhancing the formation and cultivation of many, many study groups across the landscape of Urantia. It is a special privilege for me to speak to you at this time about what I call: “*Study Groups: Actualities and Potentialities—the Glorious Good News.*”

Perhaps some of you remember having seen the movie, “*Contact*,” based on the book by Carl Sagan. *Contact* is a fictional story based on the fact that astronomers have been “listening in” on the universe on multiple wavelengths, hoping to catch a message from an extraterrestrial civilization. In the movie, *suddenly* a message is received and detected by an astronomer, played by Jodie Foster. What a triumph it is for her!

Now, in *real life*, YOU come along, and somehow you encounter *The Urantia Book* which lights up the night sky for you—like a rocket—with an even *greater brilliance*, revealing—not simply **one** more world—another “pale blue dot out there in space”—but upwards of *five trillion inhabited planets* with *seven trillion* in

prospect—innumerable celestial personalities, and even a hidden, eternal universe revolving around the stationary Isle of Paradise at “the geographic center of infinity.” Awesome! Astounding! Sensational!

I believe it is among our tasks in study groups to help new or early students of the revelation to experience this *same initial, breath-taking discovery-moment* for themselves, if they have not done so on their own already. Such an experience constitutes an instance of a profound *personal religious experience*—one of the central themes of the book **and** the essence of the religion of Jesus. ▶

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EDITORIAL

Journal team is currently seeking Assistant Editors, Proofers, and as always, Submissions!

Note: All submissions must follow quotation guidelines when using quotes from *The Urantia Book*; e.g. [Paper 141:4.2, page 1590:5]

Greetings fellow *Journal* readers,

IN OUR THIRD *JOURNAL* FOR 2014, I would like to highlight a few of the presentations and plenary talks that were given at the Study Group Symposium last June in Madison, Wisconsin. There were too many to publish in this edition, but all of the exceptional presentations can be downloaded at: <http://bit.ly/1ziELuM> courtesy of Will Sherwood.

Our first article is the Plenary talk given by David Glass, *Study Groups: Actualities and Potentialities—The Glorious Good News* is a wonderful introduction to the energy and the purpose of the Symposium. The goal has been clearly stated by David,.... *Study group hosts help plant the seeds that will one day grow into a benign Army of Believers, the Soldiers of the Circles, who will "...conquer an empire of materialistic secularism and overthrow a world sway of mechanistic naturalism."*

[Paper 195:9.2, page 2082:7]

As study group hosts, David has found the key motivational directive... *"You yourselves are now among the "spiritual nobility" of this fresh incipient epoch—of this brave new world of possibility and promise, of new potentialities and potential."*

Our second contributor is Gaetan Charland whose presentation encapsulates the history of the Urantia study group movement and sets forth the future path we must follow in his *Study Group Mission, a Vision*. Not only does Gaetan offer us a glimpse of the current world study group map, he provides us with the statistics of how many this world will actually need to spread *The Urantia Book* revelation as we have been mandated to do.

Gaetan asks us a most poignant question... *There are no doubts in my mind that you and I, the hosts of study groups, are the most important leaders of our movement. Without us, the*

revelation would certainly fail in its mission to enlighten our world. Jesus said to his Apostles "You are the light of the world" and so I am asking you. Are we the light of this world? Who is, if not us? I completely agree with Gaetan's vision that *The creation of thousands of study groups all around the world will ensure an effective and progressive way to introduce expanded truths in the current religious cultures of the world.* In recognizing this vision, we actualize the statement **"the religion of Jesus shall not fail."**

The third presentation from Joyce Patterson, goes a step further into the workings of a study group and expands upon the overview and psyche of the Publication Mandate, reiterating why study groups are essential and how they interface with the mandate in **Carpe Diem—Seize the Day—Progressive Evolution of Study Groups**. Joyce makes available a condensed version of some specific Publication Mandate advices and by questioning us along the way she affords us a new perspective by associating the goals contained in the Publication Mandate with how to apply them in your study groups.

Goal Setting can be a new and innovative technique of inspiring the study group to move beyond the standard study group model. She also delivers an acronym for us to follow while setting those goals, Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time specific = SMART. Relevant for the task of translation into other languages."

The fourth article **Effective Study Group Leadership: Lighting the Way** by David Kulieke focuses on instilling and encouraging *"wise and vigorous leadership"* in a study group setting. To do this he outlines what he believes are the *three major concerns that study groups face... the need for increased but real spirituality within our groups, improved study of The Urantia Book, and greater attention paid to improving our sense of community.*

In increasing the spirituality of a group David also touches on the topic of prayer in a study group and the differing opinions and feelings tied to it. He recognizes that... *how we bring our spiritual communion into a group can be a delicate undertaking and represents a challenge for study group leaders.* With his presentation he helps group leaders address and accomplish this. I agree

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JOURNAL

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with his direction that if we... *use the book to grow spiritually, then we also must study The Urantia Book effectively to enhance our spiritual lives. Our spiritual growth and our relationships are our true ends; studying the teachings of The Urantia Book is a means to those ends.* David also lists a variety of different ways and means of study in this informing, entertaining and enlightening presentation.

Our final article, **Parables as Inspirations for Study Groups** by Tonia Baney, looks at the way Jesus taught and how he utilized stories of real people to personalize his teachings and enhance his spiritual truths, and how they can be a wonderful tool in the study of *The Urantia Book*. ▶

Study Groups cont. from page 1

Okay. That's my first point. Now: **Going on.**

As we read the Urantia Papers, we become aware that the entire series of our planet's epochal revelations have a cumulative influence and effect. Each one builds upon the others. In *The Urantia Book* we have a recapitulation of **all** of the first four—plus, of course, the complete text of the fifth. Thus it behooves us to *see our outreach efforts* not only as expressions of our *own* enthusiasm based on **our** response to just the fifth revelation, but as *revivals and continuations*—as **expansions**—of the heroic efforts of the noble *Vanites*, who remained true to Michael during the Lucifer Rebellion; of the bold and dedicated *Sethite* priests and missionaries going out from the Second Garden; of the intrepid and adventurous *Salemite* messengers commissioned by Machiventa Melchizedek to proclaim salvation by faith to all peoples; and even of the incomparable *apostles and disciples of Jesus*, who responded to the call to service while facing very real and perilous, even appalling, dangers of virulent persecutions and the likelihood of an excruciating and ignominious death.

From the inclusion of the history of these accounts, *it seems clear*: We are to draw strength, courage, inspiration and determination from knowing about and conjoining our efforts with such illustrious predecessors—as we take upon ourselves the Master's yoke of service! It is my contention that nothing less than a similar *heroic* effort on our part and on the part of our successors will suffice for our long-term success.

Jesus' stirring words to his apostles continue to reverberate to us today:

“...you are the first volunteers of a long line of sincere believers in the kingdom who will astonish all mankind by their heroic

Editorial cont. from page 2

Jesus realized quite early in his ministry that whatever he did he would be attacked by those who did or would not understand. Therefore the parables came into being. Some are simple, others are difficult but all were and are important, just as important now as they were then.

The parable provides for a simultaneous appeal to vastly different levels of mind and spirit. The parable stimulates the imagination, challenges the discrimination, and provokes critical thinking; it promotes sympathy without arousing antagonism. [Paper 151:3.6, page 1692:5]

Using her personal experience of study and introduction of this wonderful tome to family and friends Tonia has come to fully appreciate the assistance of the parable in sharing the revelation; *This is very important as one needs sympathy when trying to tell a truth which may be difficult of understanding.*

The parable proceeds from the things which are known to the discernment of the unknown. The parable utilizes the material and natural as a means of introducing the spiritual and the super material. [Paper 151:3.7, page 1692:6]

Happy and enlightened Studying and Reading!

Suzanne Kelly skelly@wtmi.net ■

devotion to these teachings. No armies of the world have ever displayed more courage and bravery than you and your loyal successors who shall go forth to all the world proclaiming the good news—the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.” [Paper 143:1.6, page 1608:4] emphasis added

We study group hosts need to see to it that our groups' members are aware of our planet's magnificent spiritual legacy, of the distinguished spiritual nobility of our revelatory heritage—*not overlooking or forgetting the tremendous unselfish investment and sacrificial service* on the part of *our immediate forebears in the 20th century* who were a part of the nexus of events which produced the Urantia Papers and put them into our hands.

I believe we should understand the service of forming and fostering study groups *in its broadest cosmic and evolutionary context—for what it truly is*—a rare and privileged opportunity to come on board, still almost at its inception, on a venture which is destined to make more differences in this world than any war which has ever been waged, any moral, political, social, cultural, or scientific discovery, reform or movement in all of human history.

Such is my second point!

Third: Serving as a study group host is a part of our personal response to the **Master's** injunction to go into all the world proclaiming the **glorious good news** of *man's eternal sonship with the Universal Father*—and the twin truth of man's everlasting brotherhood with his fellow man.

...expansions—of the heroic efforts of the noble Vanites, who remained true to Michael during the Lucifer Rebellion; of the bold and dedicated Sethite priests and missionaries going out from the Second Garden; of the intrepid and adventurous Salemite messengers commissioned by Machiventa Melchizedek to proclaim salvation by faith to all peoples...

Regarding our study groups—which I like to call “Kingdom Pods”—let us hear again these words of Jesus to the apostles and to us: **“...this small beginning ... shall multiply and grow until eventually the whole earth shall be filled with the praise of my Father.”** [Paper 140:1.7, page 1569:4] Viewed objectively, study groups may appear to be a modest undertaking, but they carry that same promise of the Master—to eventually transform the planet by providing favorable contexts in which **“the great change in the heart of man,”** described by Jesus, can take place. Study group hosts help plant the seeds that will one day grow into a benign Army of Believers, the Soldiers of the Circles, who will **“...conquer an empire of materialistic secularism and overthrow a world sway of mechanistic naturalism.”** [Paper 195:9.2, page 2082:7]

Now—if you please—let's engage in an “experiment”: Everyone put a big, lovely, winsome, Urantian smile on your face—and then, without standing up, look all around the room at everyone else, at all the revelation students gathered here, who you can comfortably see from your position—you are *looking* at the *vanguard* of the leadership of *The Urantia Book* **community** of our era, who (along with many in absentia) are charged with the solemn responsibility of carrying the light of life across our world and into the hearts and minds of everyone who will receive our message, **the glorious good news** of divine sonship with God. *You* are

looking at the loyal Vanites and the Sethite priests of today, at the Salemite missionaries of our generation and at the Jesusonian apostles and disciples of our era. *You yourselves are* now among the “spiritual nobility” of this fresh incipient epoch—of this brave new world of possibility and promise, of new potentialities and potential.

Therefore, whenever, in the future, it occurs to any of us that *The Urantia Book* community or some Urantia

As custodians of spiritual truth and as stewards of the revelation, we cannot permit ourselves to become truth-holders.

Book reader should *do* a certain thing, *let’s get up and do it!* Because *what you now see is what you get*—what you **are** is what you get! The activities and vitality of study groups—and therefore, in part—the destiny of the planet—are in your hands.

In study groups people learn about their true heavenly Father—his **real** nature—his unconditional love, and his unfathomably merciful, abundantly forgiving and progress-supporting nature. A Revelation student is enabled not only to find his *place in this life*—to discover *meanings and values* in the context of his earth-experience—but he can also find clarity in his **cosmic orientation** and in his **spiritual direction** toward God.

Mercy, patience, tolerance and *fatherly love* are qualities of successful hosts. Further characteristics would include:

- 1) a constantly improving personal comprehension of the revelation;
- 2) a supreme dedication to the mission of Michael *and* to the (partially comprehended) eternal purpose of the Universal Father;
- 3) an approximate appreciation of the scope and awesomeness of creation;
- 4) a cheerful attitude of generosity and good will; and
- 5) *an implicit reverence for the divine.*

I believe it is in the best interests of hosts to *visit other study groups* if at all possible, to correspond with other hosts (easily done in this age of the internet), and to *be creative in seeking additional means of promoting inter-study group cross-fertilization*. If an area is blessed with more than one group within convenient driving distance, accommodation should be made to relate the groups or to provide social events for all the groups’ members. Also, multiple-study group projects can be very educational—enlightening, illuminating, and fun!

And speaking of fun: Please permit me to interject a little joke, *un petit bon mot*, at this point. You know it has been said that if you want to talk to God, the best thing you can do is to go off quietly by yourself somewhere and pray to him. But if you want to *see* God, then the best thing to do is to text him a message to set up an appointment with him while you drive along a busy freeway.

In conclusion, I would say that the universe personalities have done their part for our new epoch in the astounding act of giving us a new revelation. And it now remains for *us* to assist *humanity* to take note and take advantage the tremendous potentials represented by the new gift.

As custodians of spiritual truth and *as stewards of the revelation*, we cannot permit ourselves to become truth-holders. The world is too hungry, too needy, too beloved by God to be ignored.



Study groups provide the *cradles of credulity* wherein leaders of the spiritual renaissance can be re-born—leaders who can direct others in our world’s ever-advancing “... **march toward a new and unrevealed planetary destiny.**” [Paper 99:1.1, page 1086:4]

Perhaps, we can all *catch the vision of a living network* of illuminated truth-outposts, a *worldwide system of study groups*, which would provide this generation and the next with an effective means of responding to the immense moral trust implicit in our having become beneficiaries of this cosmic gift.

Such a vital network of study groups could be activated by some communications systems the infrastructures for which are already in place through global internet and similar and new media systems.

We urgently need study groups to provide an active and aggressive outreach program to contact the “confused minds” the revelators speak of, and to minister to those “humanly dislocated persons” on this planet of rapidly shifting social, economic, and political conditions.

Let us hear again the midwayers as they declare:

“The call to the adventure of building a new and transformed human society by means of the spiritual rebirth of Jesus’ brotherhood of the kingdom should thrill all who believe in him as men have not been stirred since the days when they walked about on earth as his companions in the flesh.” [Paper 195:10.6, page 2084:6]

So: Our assignment, as I see it today, is to respond to these challenges of the revelators **in a heroic manner**. We can strengthen ourselves for our mission (first) by consciously conjoining and aligning our efforts with the outstanding throngs of revelation-disseminators of previous epochs, (second) by accepting the Master’s invitation to go into all the world proclaiming **the glorious good news** of man’s eternal sonship with God, and (third) by zealously returning to our study groups with renewed vigor, with a will single to the discernment and doing of the Father’s will. For all time, Jesus pronounced the everlasting summons to represent him in the world even as he represented his Father, when he said, “As the Father sent me into the world, so send I you!” ■

Study group mission, a vision

GAETAN G. CHARLAND
Canada



Study Groups worldwide—a vision taking shape

Dear leaders of the Urantia movement,

TODAY, NEARLY 59 YEARS AFTER THE publication of *The Urantia Book* and having been told to create thousands of study groups; we can reference roughly a little more than 500 study groups worldwide. There might be some that we do not know about, but I doubt there are that many more we do not know of. In my last assessment of the number of study groups, I found those numbers distributed as shown in the diagram below.



Assessment of study groups today (number and quality)—Vision

As you can see we are far from reaching the first milestone of one thousand study groups. Not only did we not yet reach that number, our study groups are lacking in their mission to expand cosmic consciousness and enhance spiritual perception while they are missing the opportunity to train leaders and teachers. From a survey that was done last year by one reader in Estonia

who contacted a majority of study group hosts from the Study Group Directory, many study groups offer very few opportunities for their members to integrate and practice what they learn. A lot of them have problems increasing the number of participants while they struggle to be a place of learning and sharing the teachings. Another survey made by the Foundation paints a very sober picture about the number of readers who never participated in a study group. Not only has the number of groups stagnated, but also the quality of many is questionable if we listen to what many say about their experience in some of them.

...we are far from reaching the first milestone of one thousand study groups.

Let us ask ourselves a few questions:

- What is so important about study groups that the revelators told us to create thousands of them?
- What is their purpose besides offering a place of socialization for readers?
- Can study groups be the leverage or one of the many means at our disposal to spiritually uplift our societies, our religious culture?
- Can study groups do more than just be reading groups or do topical studies?
- Can they be used to train leaders and teachers?
- Can they be used to help participants integrate the teachings in their own lives?
- Can they be used to promote spiritual growth and service oriented activities?
- How do study groups influence society and us?

These are questions we will be exploring during this symposium. But before we go further, let's have a look at some numbers to give us an idea of what is required of us and how many study groups it might require to change the world.



"The Book belongs to the era immediately to follow the conclusion of the present ideological struggle. That will be the day when men will be willing to seek truth and righteousness. When the chaos of the present confusion has passed, it will be more readily possible to formulate the cosmos of a new and improved era of human relationships. And it is for this better order of affairs on earth that the Book has been made ready." Publication

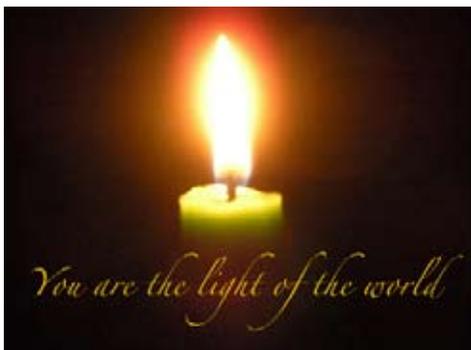
Mandate

By social standards, it takes years and many generations for any significant changes resulting from a Revelation to be integrated in the evolutionary religious cultures of the world.

The Urantia Book tells us that the present chaos will last another thousand years, does that mean that this era the revelators refer to in the Publication Mandate will come in about one thousand years? If so, it makes sense that we would need all that time to create many thousands of study groups and train many leaders and teachers. Usually in society significant changes take hundreds of thousands

of years to be achieved. If we look at how many years before Jesus Melchizedek appeared, we can have a small appreciative idea of how long it might take for spiritual changes to happen. By social standards, it takes years and many generations for any significant changes resulting from a Revelation to be integrated in the evolutionary religious cultures of the world. We are at the beginning, but we need to make every effort count by establishing a culture of good quality study groups. How we do this, is what this symposium is all about.

You are the light of the world



There are no doubts in my mind that you and I, the hosts of study groups are the most important leaders of our movement. Without us, the revelation would certainly fail in its mission to enlighten our world. Jesus said to his Apostles **"You are the light of the world"** and so I am asking you, are we the light of this world?

Who is, if not us?

What is this light that Jesus was talking about? Could it be the values of truth, beauty and goodness that should be expressed in our life as fruits of the spirit .

"By their fruits you shall know them," said Jesus. As host of study groups are we manifesting those fruits in our life?

"We are admonished to let our light so shine that our fellows will be guided into new and godly paths of enhanced living." [Paper 140:4.5, page 1572:5]

As hosts of study groups we need to fully endorse the responsibilities that such a role is placing on our shoulders. We need to become the examples that we so desire this world to become.

You are the salt of the earth



"You are the salt of the earth, salt with a saving savor. But if this salt has lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is henceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men." [Paper 140:4.2, page 1572:2]

What is the nature or flavor of the salt that we should be?

Is not love the principal ingredient of service?

Without love, nothing is of any value in this life, if we do not do what we do with love, than everything we do has lost its true value, its flavor and should henceforth be good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under the foot of men.

As hosts of study groups, the love of our father, of Michael and our fellow men should be the prime element and motivation of our service to this revelation.

We are the leaders of this revelation



Are we not as host of study groups the leaders of this revelation?

Will we accept this important role?

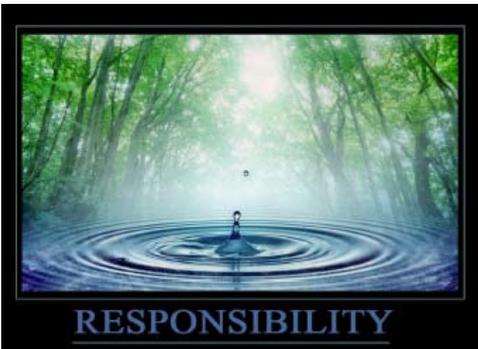
Will we be ready to learn and do everything we can to become very efficient ambassadors of this revelation by becoming a better host of our study group?

Or will we let the opportunity pass?

Today, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow and after we go back home, will we be thinking about those questions that will be asked of us during this symposium?

What will be our answers?

Responsibilities of Hosts



We can learn to be a more effective host by:

- ✓ Fixing ourselves some objectives and share them with the group.
- ✓ Acquiring new techniques of learning and teachings.
- ✓ Introducing new ways of studying *The Urantia Book*
- ✓ Helping students become involved in service projects.
- ✓ Focusing on spiritual and intellectual growth.
- ✓ Doing and encouraging participants of our group in making presentations in study groups.

Help create thousands of study groups



- ✓ Use the resources of the association close to us to help with names of readers who are interested in participating or hosting a study groups.
- ✓ If the numbers of participants in our group is more that 12, train someone as a host to start their own study group.
- ✓ Encourage members of our group to start their own study group.
- ✓ Participate in the creation of new study groups by supporting them with our presence.
- ✓ Register our groups on the Directory for study groups

Nurture natural leaders and teachers in our groups by sharing responsibilities.

Help train leaders and teachers



- ✓ Introduce Urantia Book Internet School (UBIS) courses in our study groups.
- ✓ Encourage the members of our groups to take UBIS courses
- ✓ Use presentations or study aids to foster teaching skills.
- ✓ Nurture natural leaders and teachers in our groups by sharing responsibilities.
- ✓ Make our study group more dynamics by changing the format.
- ✓ Keep the focus on the real goal of study groups

We are the sowers



Help the dissemination of the book and its teachings

By not attracting undue attention, we will be able to progress in our mission without any major hindrance or resistance from the organized religions and the media.

“You see, my children, the appeal to human feelings is transitory and utterly disappointing; the exclusive appeal to the intellect of man is likewise empty and barren; it is only by making your appeal to the spirit which lives within the human mind that you can hope to achieve lasting success and accomplish those marvelous transformations of human character that

are presently shown in the abundant yielding of the genuine fruits of the spirit in the daily lives of all who are thus delivered from the darkness of doubt by the birth of the spirit into the light of faith—the kingdom of heaven.” [Paper 152:6.3, page 1705:3]

- ✓ Introduce ways of dissemination or outreach in our group so each reader shares in the responsibility of disseminating the revelation.
- ✓ Use material already available to help and teach readers of our groups on how to share *The Urantia Book* and its teachings.
- ✓ Initiate book placement in our area.
- ✓ Nurture new seeds around us like Jesus did during his tour of the Mediterranean Sea.
- ✓ Study the life of Jesus in our groups to learn how Jesus was spreading the truth.
- ✓ Nurture new seeds



The journey has just begun



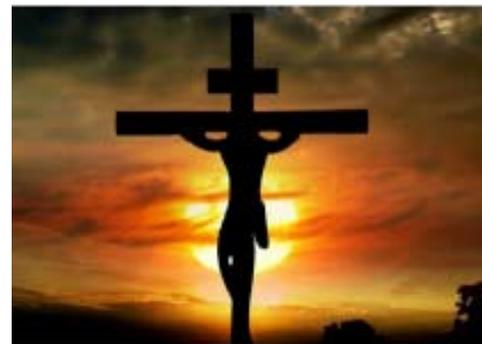
According to *The Urantia Book* and the Publication Mandate, the next era will follow the conclusion of the present ideological struggle. That will be the day when men will be willing to seek truth and righteousness. We are still far away from that time, the book was given to us to prepare the world for that era, there is no time to lose but we must be careful on how we proceed.

“(You) must learn to possess (your) souls in patience. (You) are in association with a revelation of truth, which is a part of the natural evolution of religion on this world. Over rapid growth would be suicidal. The book is being given to those who are ready for it long before the day of its world-wide mission.” Publication Mandate

The creation of thousands of study groups all around the world will ensure an effective and progressive way to introduce expanded truths in the current religious cultures of the world. By not attracting undue attention, we will be able to progress in our mission without any major hindrance or resistance from the organized religions and the media.

The expression of love to future generations

What are we ready to give and do for this revelation?



Jesus gave his life and so did the Apostles and many of his disciples, let's not be one of those who will say when it is too late *“I should have done more for the Revelation.”*

“(You) who have dedicated (your) lives to the service of the Book and the Brotherhood can little realize the import of (your) doings. (You) will doubtless live and die without fully realizing that (you) are participating in the birth of a new age of religion on this world.” Publication Mandate

May the Father bless us all in our efforts to uplift our world spiritually. ■

Carpe Diem—Seize the Day—Progressive Evolution of Study Groups

JOYCEE PATTERSON
USA



Breakout study group session

GOOD MORNING AND WELCOME TO DAY Two of the study group symposium! This presentation will focus on “HOW” to accomplish the Publication Mandate directives. We must seize the moment which is before us.

By a show of hands, how many present today have led or hosted a study group? (Respond according to number of hands raised—such as: So, I see that virtually all of us present today have had the honor and responsibility of hosting a Study Group.

During the breakout sessions today we will individually be enriched by the vast experience we EACH bring to the table this week. Whether as host or participant or as a person with both experiences, we each will now profit by fully understanding the Publication Mandate and experiencing the joy of assisting in the actualization of its provisions.

After yesterday’s presentations several of you are probably now thinking there is far more to leading a study group than we first thought?

In 1974 I was introduced to *The Urantia Book* while in Sunday school at the Tampa, FL Unity Church. As we were comparing the Unity teachings on individuality and personality Steve Law opened a very large tome and shared what *The Urantia Book* had to say. This Sunday School class became my first Urantia study group—with each member a relative newcomer to the book. We chose to compare the teachings of *The Urantia Book* with the Unity School of Christianity teachings and metaphysical interpretations of Biblical events. So, even while we were based in a religious/spiritual setting, in this—my first study group—we were intellectually analyzing our beliefs about God, Jesus, Christianity, and our purpose in living. The emphasis was on intellectual understanding—important but NOT in full alignment with the Publication Mandate.

After yesterday’s focus on the WHY of study groups, are we now ready to rethink the purpose and content of our study groups?

It is now time to focus on HOW to structure our study groups to best achieve the needed results to fulfill the Publication Mandate.

We must EACH return home invigorated with a complete understanding of the What, Why and HOW of the mandate; bursting with creative strategies to begin the process of change; confident in our ability to teach our local study group members the truth, beauty and goodness of the Publication Mandate.

We must not just understand the need for change but KNOW HOW to re-organize, facilitate, and implement this new understanding.

We pray for guidance, we ask to know God’s will, and today we cannot deny that we are specifically TOLD of the WILL for us to use our study groups to accomplish the mandate goals. *Are we ready for the challenge?*

Today let’s determine what we need to do to put into practice what Gaetan and David talked about yesterday.

On Day 1 Gaetan convinced us once more the ‘WHY’ of hosting study groups.

Today, in Day 2, we will learn and practice “HOW” to host effective study groups which meet the criteria of the Publication Mandate.

This study group symposium is about taking the next steps to more closely align our study groups with the ideals of the mandate.

The revelators put much thought into the Publication Mandate so that we would more completely understand our need to host study groups which develop leaders and trainers of the Revelation.

Study groups should be viewed as a safe place for members to share both understandings and misunderstandings of the teachings and to bring spirituality into the largely intellectual study group forum.

As study group leaders we now recognize the need to put more thought into the mission and goal of our study groups; the need to consider the actual role all study groups should play in participating in the mission of Michael and in our own soul growth.

Some specific mandate advices: (in shortened form)

...we were intellectually analyzing our beliefs about God, Jesus, Christianity, and our purpose in living. The emphasis was on intellectual understanding—important but NOT in full alignment with the Publication Mandate.

Study groups should be viewed as a safe place for members to share both understandings and misunderstandings of the teachings...

1. **The Book belongs to the era** immediately to follow the conclusion of the present ideological struggle. That will be the day **when men will be willing to seek truth and righteousness...** Seeking truth and righteousness is spiritual, not intellectual.

2. It will be more readily possible to **formulate the cosmos of a new and improved era of human relationships. And it is for this better order of affairs on earth that the Book has been made ready.**

– We must ACT to bring about a “better order of affairs on earth”—we must leave the intellectual realm of THINKING, ANALYZING, EVALUATING—and DO; we must FOLLOW the STEPS to change and improve the affairs on earth.

3. An **early publication of the Book** has been provided so that it may be in hand **for the training of leaders and teachers.**

– While training certainly requires intellectualization, all leaders and teachers must ACT, must be in tune with both the Publication Mandate and with the students of *The Urantia Book*—leaders must teach new students of *The Urantia Book* to ACT, to make CHANGES within their lives, to seek truth and righteousness, to be PART of the new and improved era of human relationships, and finally, these new students must understand that they too are being trained to be leaders and trainers of the teachings of *The Urantia Book*.

4. Its presence is also required **to engage the attention of persons of means** who may be thus led **to provide funds for translations into other languages.**

– So we might ask, should study groups provide a means for individuals who are not rich, to donate small amounts of money which the group collects and periodically donates as a lump sum for this purpose? Do we need a method for EACH person to be part of this glorious goal of providing the teachings of *The Urantia Book* to people around the world in their native tongues?

5. You who have dedicated your lives to the service of the Book and the Brotherhood can little realize the import of your doings. **You will doubtless live and die without fully realizing that you are participating in the birth of a new age of religion on this world.**

– Isn't this awesome?! To be TOLD that we are PARTICIPATING in the birth of a NEW AGE of RELIGION on this world is a JOY and also a RESPONSIBILITY. To KNOW this, we MUST do our part!! Don't we WANT to get involved?!?

Don't we WANT to help our fellow Urantians to KNOW Jesus' teachings so that when He returns our brothers and sisters will NOT turn away from him or kill him again??

So, HOW do we use our study groups to participate in the birth of this new age of religion on Urantia??

And, does the word 'religion' bother some readers who have chosen not to part of any earthly religion and who profess to not BE religious?

6. You will do well **to diligently study the order, plan, and methods of progression as they were enacted in the earth life of Michael when the Word was made flesh.** You are becoming actors in an ensuing episode when the Word is made book. Great is the difference in these dispensations of religion, but **many are the lessons which can be learned from a study of the former age.**

– Clearly, we are meant to not just learn *The Urantia Book* teachings but to study the order, plan and methods of progression as unfolded in the earth life of Michael. We are meant to learn the lessons from this time of Jesus' life on earth.

7. You must again **study the times of Jesus on earth....** Carefully take **note of how the kingdom of heaven was inaugurated in the world. Evolve slowly or unfold naturally? Or, with a sudden show of force and with spectacular exhibition of power? Evolutionary or revolutionary?**

– *We must ask why it is important to study and KNOW how the kingdom of heaven came? What are the KEY learnings we must garner from our studies of The Urantia Book?*

8. You must learn to **possess your souls in patience.** You are in association with **a revelation of truth which is a part of the natural evolution of religion on this world.** Overrapid growth would be suicidal.

– PATIENCE... we MUST learn to be patient in everything we do. Patience, born of understanding, brings peace to our lives AND shows others a model of behavior little known on our planet right now.

This is confirmed and expanded by a Melchizedek on page 435 in *The Urantia Book* when he speaks about an order of local system seraphim: **“These seraphim teach the fruitfulness of patience: That stagnation is certain death, but that overrapid growth is equally suicidal;”** [Paper 39:4.12, page 435:5] emphasis added We must move forward and grow.

9. This book is being given **to those who are ready for it** long before the day of its worldwide mission. **THOUSANDS OF STUDY GROUPS MUST BE BROUGHT INTO EXISTENCE AND THE BOOK MUST BE TRANSLATED INTO MANY TONGUES.** Thus will the book be in readiness when the battle for man's liberty is finally won and the world is once more made safe for the religion of Jesus and the freedom of mankind.

– We have study groups around the world—and now it is time to have MORE study groups and to focus the purpose of these study groups on the inspiring advices given in the Publication Mandate.

Let us now look at the 4 Parts of a study group: Facilitator Skills, Goal Setting, Balancing the Spiritual and Intellectual, and honoring our Father within the study group forum.

Religion does need new leaders, spiritual men and women who will dare to depend solely on Jesus and his incomparable teachings. If Christianity persists in neglecting its spiritual mission while it continues to busy itself with social and material problems, the spiritual renaissance must await the coming of these new teachers of Jesus' religion who will be exclusively devoted to the spiritual regeneration of men. And then will these spirit—born souls quickly supply the leadership and inspiration requisite for the social, moral, economic, and political reorganization of the world. [Paper 195:9.4, page 2082:9] emphasis added

So while we may need to learn good or great Facilitator Skills, **the pre-requisite is really a need for SPIRITUAL men and women who will dare to depend solely on Jesus and his incomparable teachings!**

WE must be the new teachers—a spiritual renaissance is waiting for us!

Facilitator Skills—We will examine facilitator skills more fully in our breakout sessions with an emphasis on the importance of having and developing these facilitator skills in a study group setting. At the beginning of this session I asked how many present today have ever led or hosted a study group. *Will you please raise your hands again?* It appears that most of us do have experience leading study groups.

To discover leaders society must now turn to the conquests of peace: industry, science, and social achievement. [Paper 70:2.21, page 786:12]

Jesus gives his final admonitions and warnings after his farewell discourse to the eleven:

“...In my universe and in my Father's universe of universes, our brethren—sons are dealt with as individuals in all their spiritual relations, but in all group relationships we unfailingly provide for definite leadership. Our kingdom is a realm of order, and where two or more will creatures act in co-operation, there is always provided the authority of leadership.” [Paper 181:2.17, page 1959:0]

So, hosts of study groups – do not abdicate leadership, we may designate leaders for different sessions but having a leader is key.

“Please turn to your neighbor (or shoulder partner on left or right...) and share one facilitator skill you think is essential.”

Who will share the facilitator skills you discussed?
(Write them on paper??)

“Leadership is dependent on natural ability, discretion, will power, and determination. Spiritual destiny is dependent on faith, love, and devotion to truth—hunger and thirst for righteousness—the wholehearted desire to find God and to be like him.” [Paper 156:5.7, page 1739:2]

After members share—conclusion is made that facilitator skills are crucial to the success of all study groups and that group members will definitely recognize those facilitators who exhibit excellent leadership skills. (reference was made to the *UAI Study Group Guide*, a very useful resource for study group facilitators).

What should our Goal(s) be?

Throughout *The Urantia Book* we read that all humans have the same goals—whether we actively recognize that or not—a common motive for life service; a desire to do God's will; and, a common goal of existence—to find the Father in heaven—thus proving to the universe that we each have become like him.

“Your spirit unity implies two things, which always will be found to harmonize in the lives of individual believers: First, you are possessed with a common motive for life service; you all desire above everything to do the will of the Father in heaven. Second, you all have a common goal of existence; you all purpose to find the Father in heaven, thereby proving to the universe that you have become like him.” [Paper 141:5.3, page 1592:1] emphasis added

...facilitator skills are crucial to the success of all study groups and that group members will definitely recognize those facilitators who exhibit excellent leadership skills.

Knowing we all have common goals can make it easier for a leader. Expect and look for agreement as study group goals relate to knowing the Father.

With goals we only have to think of what GOOD to bring to the hearts of our members, not what to take away from their experiences. Jesus said to Simon: *“...how many times have I instructed you to refrain from all efforts to take something out of the hearts of those who seek salvation? How often have I told you to labor only to put some living truths into these hungry souls? Lead men into the kingdom and the great and living truths of the kingdom will presently drive out all serious error....”* [Paper 141:6.2, page 1592:4]

On introducing your fellows to God, Jesus said in part: *“When you enter the kingdom, you are reborn. You cannot teach the deep things of the spirit to those who have been born only of the flesh; first see that men are born of the spirit before you seek to instruct them in the advanced ways of the spirit. ... Introduce men to God and as the sons of God before you discourse on the doctrines of the fatherhood of God and the sonship of men. Do not strive with men—always be patient. It is not your kingdom; you are only ambassadors. Simply go forth proclaiming: This is the kingdom of heaven—God is your Father and you are his sons, and this good news, if you wholeheartedly believe it, is your eternal salvation.”* [Paper 141:6.4, page 1592:6]

We might say that Jesus had a goal for his disciples... *“Jesus...desired his disciples, having tasted of the good spirit realities of the kingdom, so to live in the world that men, by seeing their lives, would become kingdom conscious and hence be led to inquire of believers concerning the ways of the kingdom....”* [Paper 141:7.3, page 1593:4]

If we are to be leaders and trainers/teachers of the truth then we must know that... *“The Master sought to impress upon all teachers of the gospel of the kingdom that their only business was to reveal God to the individual man as his Father—to lead this individual man to become son-conscious, then to present this same man to God as his faith son....”* [Paper 141:7.4, page 1593:5]

Goal Setting

Goal setting can be a new and innovative technique of inspiring the study group to move beyond the standard study group model.

Now that we recognize the need to CHANGE our study groups to focus on the leadership and training of readers, we need to ask ourselves HOW to accomplish this?

If we are to be leaders and trainers/trainers of the truth then we must know that...

"The Master sought to impress upon all teachers of the gospel of the kingdom that their only business was to reveal God to the individual man as his Father..."

How quickly do we need or want to progress? Is it wise to jump quickly into a radical departure from our study group norms? Or, is it better to go slowly with a series of short-term goals which are designed to slowly lead us into a fuller understanding of the Publication Mandate, and also slowly develop leaders and trainers among our members?

Where do we want to be? Will our study group members need to be 'sold' on the idea of a new format and/or process for our regular study group? Is a short term goal the best starting point in this quest to re-focus our study groups?

These are questions you will focus on in a portion of today's breakout workshop.

We will also introduce SMART Goals—which set the prerequisites for goal writing.

• SMART goals—an acronym for:

- Strategic;
- Measurable;
- Attainable;
- Realistic; and,
- Time specific

No great social or economic change should be attempted suddenly. Time is essential to all types of human adjustments—physical, social, or economic. Only moral and spiritual adjustments can be made on the spur of the moment, and even these require the passing of time for the full outworking of their material and social repercussions.

[Paper 81:6.40, page 911:5]

In our breakout sessions we will consider setting small goals; goals which might be developed and worked on by members from our home study groups. Or, some of you may prefer to set the 'final goal'—based upon the Publication Mandate—and then create a series of small goals which will lead up to the accomplishment of our most important and final goal. *How many of you want to be slow at achieving your goal?* (a little humor...)

Balance of Spiritual & Intellectual

By virtue of being in a study group we've been studying *The Urantia Book* on a very intellectual level, while a balance of spiritual and intellectual is almost certainly what the writers of *The Urantia Book* would prefer. This intellectual approach of reading and discussing probably dominates most of our study group experiences. It's time to rethink this format!

Prayer is designed to make man less thinking but more realizing; it is not designed to increase knowledge but rather to expand insight.

Worship is intended to anticipate the better life ahead and then to reflect these new spiritual significances back onto the life which now is. Prayer is spiritually sustaining, but worship is divinely creative.

Worship is the technique of looking to the One for the inspiration of service to the many. Worship is the yardstick which measures the extent of the soul's detachment from the material universe and its simultaneous and secure attachment to the spiritual realities of all creation.

Prayer is self-reminding—sublime thinking; worship is self-forgetting—superthinking. Worship is effortless attention, true and ideal soul rest, a form of restful spiritual exertion.

Worship is the act of a part identifying itself with the Whole; the finite with the Infinite; the son with the Father; time in the act of striking step with eternity. Worship is the act of the son's personal communion with the divine Father, the assumption of refreshing, creative, fraternal, and romantic attitudes by the human soul-spirit. [Paper 143:7.4–8, page 1616:6–10]

Perhaps the reason most Christian churches have doxologies, statements of faith, standardized prayers, and weekly re-statements of church beliefs is to KEEP the congregation tuned into the REASON for attending church; the focus our lives should follow; and, the expectations of God for us to serve and love our brothers as we would have God love us?

Without becoming indoctrinated... a talking point for the breakout sessions today is the question of MISSION. Should the members of a study group work together to remind each other of the teachings of *The Urantia Book* as the teachings relate to the Publication Mandate and THEN create a mission statement which succinctly states the beliefs and goals of their group? *Should that mission statement be reiterated before each meeting?*

How do we incorporate a spiritual dimension into our group study? Jesus brought the spiritual perspective into every opportunity that was presented.

Introduce the Opportunity to Honor the Father into the Study Group

During the breakout session you will have an opportunity to discuss and try out several ways to honor our Father.

By a show of hands how many of you incorporate some form of prayer, silence, or music, for instance, into your study group sessions?

By using any of these methods we are helping initiate that man-God connection that is so much needed to honor our Father. We must have the willingness and desire.

The Universal Father never imposes any form of arbitrary recognition, formal worship, or slavish service upon the intelligent will creatures of the universes. The evolutionary inhabitants of the worlds of time and space must of themselves—in their own hearts—recognize, love, and voluntarily worship him. The Creator refuses to coerce or compel the submission of the spiritual free wills of his material creatures. The affectionate dedication of the human will to the doing of the Father's will is man's choicest gift to God; in fact, such a consecration of creature will constitutes man's only possible gift of true value to the Paradise Father. [Paper 1:1.2, page 22:5]

We honor God by doing His will.

Jesus told his apostles:

"Never forget there is only one adventure which is more satisfying and thrilling than the attempt to discover the will of the living God, and that is the supreme experience of honestly trying to do that divine will..." [Paper 155:6.11, page 1732:4]

Lets be about our Fathers business!

Thank You, Joyce Patterson ■

Effective Study Group Leadership: Lighting the Way

DAVID KULIEKE
USA

Introduction

THERE WAS A YOUNG MAN WALKING down a street one day who saw three people struggling with a piano in a doorway. The piano was wedged tightly, and the three couldn't move it. Being a good Samaritan, the young man pitched in to help. A half hour later, he paused, mopped his perspiring brow, and said, "I don't know if we'll ever get this thing out of this building." The other three looked at him and said, "What do you mean out?"

This little story illustrates a point that is made in Paper 81:

Ten men are of little more value than one in lifting a great load unless they lift together—all at the same moment.

[Paper 81:6.37, page 911:2]

But *The Urantia Book* also describes what can happen when people do work together:

...in dealing with human personality it would be nearer the truth to say that such a personality association is a sum equal to the square of the number of personalities concerned in the equation rather than the simple arithmetical sum. A social group of human beings in coordinated working harmony stands for a force far greater than the simple sum of its parts. [Paper 133:5.6, page 1477:1]

The Urantia Revelation needs our groups and our group leaders to function as well as they can if we are to prosper.

We are all dedicated to improving and to growing the number of Urantia Book study groups. Like you I want, yearn, to enhance my study groups' spirituality, to maintain or improve our quality of study, and to create more stability and community. We are always concerned about our numbers and our future, and we can all always improve what we do. I'm often reminded of an image from



Lighting the way illustration

a recent political campaign, the vision of comparing the doing of good things to "1,000 points of light." This is one way that I see our need to maintain, improve, and create study groups. To me creating real, valid groups that study *The Urantia Book*, is simply logical, and it is imperative that we not only seek to create new groups but that we continue to try to enhance and not to give up on any groups that already exist. Once we ignite one of those lights, we need to keep it burning!

If our Urantia groups are to burst forward with new vigor and success, these groups must depend very much on their leadership. Let's enlarge on the first quotation we read:

In civilization much, very much, depends on an enthusiastic and effective load-pulling spirit. Ten men are of little more value than one in lifting a great load unless they lift together—all at the same moment. And such teamwork—social cooperation—is dependent on leadership. The cultural civilizations of the past and the present have been based upon the intelligent cooperation of the citizenry with wise and progressive leaders; and until man evolves to higher levels, civilization will continue to be dependent on wise and vigorous leadership. [Paper 81:6.37, page 911:2] emphasis added

That "wise and vigorous leadership" must understand what issues they will address and how they will address them. I believe that three major concerns that study groups face are the needs for increased but real spirituality within our groups, improved study of *The Urantia Book*, and greater attention paid to improving our sense of community. Wise and vigorous leadership will consider how to gracefully and appropriately enhance prayer and

I'm often reminded of an image from a recent political campaign, the vision of comparing the doing of good things to "1,000 points of light." This is one way that I see our need to maintain, improve, and create study groups.

worship, effective study, and strong relationships within their groups.

Enhancing Spirituality Within Our Groups

The Urantia Book makes clear the value of group prayer and worship, and a significant matter for leaders to contemplate is how to fairly and appropriately enhance their groups' approaches to prayer and worship.

...how we bring our spiritual communion into a group can be a delicate undertaking and represents a challenge for study group leaders. One group I was in debated the proposal for a mandated prayer to start each meeting, while others wanted only a moment of silence, and others wanted no prayer at all.

Bill Sadler said "*The Urantia Book* is not an end in itself; it is a means to an end." I think Bill gets credit for this idea because he may have been the first to write it down. I've actually heard this idea many times and said it myself. It should be obvious; after all, the physical reality of *The Urantia Book* is nothing more than processed wood containing black abstract symbols on a white page that must be translated into words and then into ideas and then turned into facts, knowledge, meaning, and values. If applied, these values can eventually lead to relationships between personalities, including between us and God: finally, ends in themselves. So actually the book is a means to a means to a means to—well, you get the idea—to an end.

Some of our most important goals or ends are clearly stated in the oft-quoted passage from the paper "Personality Survival":

...Everything nonspiritual in human experience, excepting personality, is a means to an end. Every true relationship of mortal man with other persons—human or divine—is an end in itself.... [Paper 112:2.8, page 1228:3]

We are also told that "**Spiritual experience is the real soul of man's cosmos.**" [Paper 102:4.6, page 1123:6]

Although *The Urantia Book* strongly emphasizes our personal relationship with God as our most important spiritual activity, the book also encourages us to include prayer and worship within our groups.

... prayer need not always be individual. Group or congregational praying is very effective in that it is highly socializing in its repercussions. When a group engages in community prayer for moral enhancement and spiritual uplift, such devotions are reactive upon the individuals composing the group; they are all made better because of participation. [Paper 91:5.2, page 998:5]

I've recently heard discussed the importance of bringing more spirituality into our study groups; in truth, this is something that many readers have suggested for many years. That desire for some exists is probably not surprising. Historically, early readers sought to avoid turning our study of *The Urantia Book* into a church, perhaps because of their own experiences, perhaps because they wanted to avoid any sort of authoritative interpretation or ecclesiastical hierarchy. The atmosphere of a study group may not lead to worship and prayer as readily as does that of a church or temple wherein rituals and prescribed approaches to worship exist in buildings

designed for that purpose. However, *The Urantia Book* clearly suggests that we benefit from group prayer, thankfulness, and worship.

Thus does the mind of one augment its spiritual values by gaining much of the insight of the other. In this way men enrich the soul by pooling their respective spiritual possessions. [paper 160:2.7, page 1776:1]

Yet how we bring our spiritual communion into a group can be a delicate undertaking and represents a challenge for study group leaders. One group I was in debated the proposal for a mandated prayer to start each meeting, while others wanted only a moment of silence, and others wanted no prayer at all. We ended by making it voluntary for the leader of each meeting. Many sincere readers are quite uncomfortable with group devotions, whether due to form, to being asked to engage in an activity that is personally uncomfortable, to one's own religious background, to a discomfort with an approach that feels mystical, or to myriad other reasons. We must be mindful of the sensibilities of group members if they are to remain group members. Consequently, it is also important that the group has a strong understanding of what *The Urantia Book* teaches us about our spiritual communions.

There are many references about effective and ethical prayer which include both what not to do as well as what are genuine approaches.

Do not be so slothful as to ask God to solve your difficulties, but never hesitate to ask him for wisdom and spiritual strength to guide and sustain you while you yourself resolutely and courageously attack the problems at hand. [Paper 91:6.5, page 999:8]

Prayer may not be employed to avoid the delays of time or to transcend the handicaps of space.... [Paper 146:2.9, page 1639:4]

Prayer must never be so prostituted as to become a substitute for action.... [Paper 91:4.2, page 997:7]

...True praying is the sincere attitude of reaching heavenward for the attainment of your ideals. [Paper 144:2.2, page 1618:6]

In all your praying be fair; do not expect God to show partiality, to love you more than his other children, your friends, neighbors, even enemies.... [Paper 91:4.3, page 998:1]

Remember, even if prayer does not change God, it very often effects great and lasting changes in the one who prays.... [Paper 91:4.5, page 998:3]

The Urantia Book also warns of certain kinds of mysticism:

Mysticism... is often something of a retreat from life which is embraced by those humans who do not relish the more robust activities of living a religious life in the open arenas of human society and commerce. True religion must act.... [paper102:2.8, page 1121:1]

...When prayer becomes overmuch aesthetic..., it loses much of its socializing influence and ends toward mysticism and the isolation of its devotees. There is a certain danger associated with overmuch private praying which is corrected and prevented by group praying, community devotions. [Paper 91:7.13, page 1001:4]

Study group leaders also can consider what *The Urantia Book* says about our actual working relationships with our Thought Adjusters as they try to make their groups' prayer and worship practices valid and attractive:

Every decision you make either impedes or facilitates the function of the Adjuster... [Paper 110:6.6, page 1210:1]

You must not regard co-operation with your Adjuster as a particularly conscious process, for it is not... [Paper 110:3.6, page 1206:4]

While the voice of the Adjuster is ever within you, most of you will hear it seldom during a lifetime. [Paper 110:7.9, page 1213:4]

... it is dangerous to entertain the idea that every new concept originating in the human mind is the dictation of the Adjuster. More often, in beings of your order, that which you accept as the Adjuster's voice is in reality the emanation of your own intellect. [Paper 110:5.6, page 1208:5]

It is difficult to fully please every member of the group when it comes to instilling group practices of prayer and worship. However, group leaders at least might include the welfare of their groups when they are praying and worshiping individually. Remember the book's suggestions for "worshipful problem solving," a consistent habit of Jesus.

Improving Study

Enhancing spirituality in our study groups may be paramount. But if we are to use the book to grow spiritually, then we also must study *The Urantia Book* effectively to enhance our spiritual lives.

Our spiritual growth and our relationships are our true ends; studying the teachings of *The Urantia Book* is a means to those ends.

We do not need *The Urantia Book* to find God, who loves us, is within us, and is available to anyone who seeks him and has faith in him; nevertheless, *The Urantia Book*, the fifth epochal revelation of truth on Urantia, is a magnificent resource that helps us to find God and to better understand who we are, why we are here, and where we are going. At least it can be such an aid if we study it deeply and then sincerely try to incorporate its teachings into our lives. The fact that this revelation is presented in book form certainly tells us that the revelators want us to use our minds and use them well.

Thus, one of the most important tasks that study group leaders can do is to help readers better understand

The Urantia Book. Improved comprehension through stronger study should be one of our highest priorities.

Several references support this idea:

The divine spirit makes contact with mortal man, not by feelings or emotions, but in the realm of the highest and most spiritualized thinking. It is your thoughts, not your feelings, that lead you Godward. [Paper 101:1.3, page 1104:6]

Material mind is the arena in which human personalities live, are self-conscious, make decisions, choose God or forsake him, eternalize or destroy themselves. [Paper 111:1.3, page 1216:4]

... to start such a magnificent and intriguing adventure through space by means of the progression of time, [mortal man] should begin by the organization of knowledge into ideadecisions; next, mandate wisdom to labor unremittingly at its noble task of transforming selfpossessed ideas into increasingly practical but nonetheless supernal ideals, even those concepts which are so reasonable as ideas and so logical as ideals that the Adjuster dares so to combine and spiritize them as to render them available for such association in the finite mind.... [Paper 101:6.7, page 1112:3]

The primary mission of Michael's bestowal on Urantia was that of God knowing man, of the Creator Son of Nebadon enhancing his comprehension of and empathy for his creatures. Jesus' education while on earth was supreme, and he learned all that he could about human beings even while he loved them, he worked in many professions and became expert in several, he traveled where he could throughout the civilized world, and he was a scholar of religion and history and anything else he could learn.

Regarding Jesus' approach to his life-long learning, we are told that:

As a child [Jesus] accumulated a vast body of knowledge; as a youth he sorted, classified, and correlated this information; and now as a man of the realm he begins to organize these mental possessions preparatory to utilization in his subsequent teaching, ministry, and service.... [Paper 127:6.14, page 1405:6]

The teachings of Jesus constituted the first Urantian religion which so fully embraced a harmonious co-ordination of knowledge, wisdom, faith, truth, and love... [Paper 101:6.8, page 1112:4]

Like Jesus, a major task of our Urantia careers is to learn all that we can about others and about the world around us. I would suggest that not only do we want to study *The Urantia Book* as well as we can in our study groups, we also want to educate ourselves individually about other subjects as well. I am an English and music teacher, but I believe that, after everything we study, our vocations and our interests, some primary intellectual

...group leaders at least might include the welfare of their groups when they are praying and worshiping individually. Remember the book's suggestions for "worshipful problem solving," a consistent habit of Jesus.

pursuits become history and we must eventually begin integrating all that we learn. We are told that:

Revealed religion is the unifying element of human existence. Revelation unifies history, coordinates geology, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, sociology, and psychology.... [Paper 102:4.6, page 1123:6]

Another group has adapted what we call "Paper Topicals" instead of sequential reading; these require a focus but less preparation for the leader than would a conference workshop.

At first life was a struggle for existence; now, for a standard of living; next it will be for quality of thinking, the coming earthly goal of human existence. [Paper 81:6.28, page 910:1]

It is the purpose of education to develop and sharpen these innate endowments of the human mind; of civilization to express them; of life experience to realize them; of religion to ennoble them; and of personality to unify them. [Paper 16:6.11, page 192:7]

How To Study More Effectively

I know many of you belong to study groups which study the book well. I have been fortunate to belong to study groups in Chicago which have sincere and dedicated readers. Nevertheless, we continue to look for ways to understand *The Urantia Book* better. For example, we have always had prepared leaders and a program. But we've innovated lately. This included an entire year spent on "The Foreword" as we began our fifth sequential reading through the book since 1956. Another group has adapted what we call "Paper Topicals" instead of sequential reading; these require a focus but less preparation for the leader than would a conference workshop. I know of several groups that require homework and preparation. But I also know from observation and from the descriptions I've been told of many groups that deeper study of the book is often needed if members are to get more from reading the book.

There are many ways to approach studying *The Urantia Book* effectively, and variety is one of them. Many people enjoy reading *The Urantia Book* sequentially, and the book assuredly can be studied in-depth in that format. But whether reading sequentially or not, leaders also might implement some of these approaches:

- Use outside references that do not compromise the central purpose of studying *The Urantia Book*; these resources include having an excellent dictionary with etymologies, good atlases, and other reference books; literature and history books can often be used; *The Bible* and other sacred books, when relevant, are helpful; and, of course, study aids for *The Urantia Book*, whether print or electronic, should be readily available.
- Delve deeply into the book, even when it's difficult, even when you've just been told by a Divine Counselor that he doesn't get it, either. Everything is there for a purpose, and even if we can't reach

a final answer on the topic we are discussing, we expand our perspectives when we study and discuss these difficult ideas.

- Instead of feeling that you've wasted time when that oft-repeated phenomenon of finding your discussion addressed in the next paragraph occurs, rejoice when this happens! Notice that it doesn't happen as often, if at all, when reading alone; it happens because good discussion has opened up a topic. This is substantiation of the exquisite integrational techniques of the writing of *The Urantia Book*, of the power and need for discussion, and of the beauty of good questioning techniques.
- Through the use of the rotating moderator, give everyone a chance to speak and read if they wish. Don't let quickness or a dominating personality squash those who are quieter or less aggressive. As an English teacher, I strongly urge the raising of hands, even if the group contains only four or more people. I like to tell the story of the class I observed when I was getting my master's degree. I watched the English class of Mr. H, a very bright, sincere, and gentle soul. There were only 11 students in the class, and Mr. H didn't require raised hands. For my project, I was to keep track of each student's activities in this discussion format on a minute-to-minute basis for five class periods. To hear and watch this class, one would think it extraordinarily quiet and respectful. But at week's end my statistics showed that one student, Ben, had made more than 90% of the comments because of his alert, interested, rapid-fire, but not necessarily perceptive personality. Two other students had said almost everything else, and the other eight students said virtually nothing all week except when whispering to each other.
- Attend to physical issues that can help or inhibit a good study meeting, such as having plenty of copies of the book available, staying on time, and having comfortable seating so that everyone can see each other: when we welcome our unseen friends, that is not supposed to include George who is crammed into the alcove around the corner.
- Try different study and educational approaches. One place you can start is by perusing the document "Prime Education Quotations by Category," an eighteen-page list of references of what *The Urantia Book* says about education and teaching.

I do not believe we should ever apologize for seeking to improve the quality of thought in our study groups; what we also need to do is enhance the spiritual quality of our meetings.

When the development of the intellectual nature proceeds faster than that of the spiritual, such a situation renders communication with the Thought Adjuster both difficult and dangerous. Likewise, overspiritual development tends to produce a fanatical

and perverted interpretation of the spirit leadings of the divine indweller.... [Paper 110:6.4, page 1209:4]

Balance is the key.

Creating Community and Relationships

Besides addressing prayer and worship, as well as seeking improved study, study group leaders must consider steps to cultivating community and relationships.

Personality cannot very well perform in isolation. Man is innately a social creature; he is dominated by the craving of belongingness. It is literally true, "No man lives unto himself." [Paper 112:1.16, page 1227:6]

...The Creators well know that it is "not good for man to be alone," and provision is accordingly made for companionship, even on Paradise. [Paper 25:8.4, page 283:5]

If no one had mentioned anything about study groups, we would have invented them, not only for the sake of group prayer and enhanced study but for the sake of relationship and community.

There is a real purpose in the socialization of religion. It is the purpose of group religious activities to dramatize the loyalties of religion; to magnify the lures of truth, beauty, and goodness; to foster the attractions of supreme values; to enhance the service of unselfish fellowship; to glorify the potentials of family life; to promote religious education; to provide wise counsel and spiritual guidance; and to encourage group worship. And all live religions encourage human friendship, conserve morality, promote neighborhood welfare, and facilitate the spread of the essential gospel of their respective messages of eternal salvation. [Paper 99:6.2, page 1092:2]

...The group potential is always far in excess of the simple sum of the attributes of the component individuals. [Paper 10:5.2, page 113:3]

I am reminded again of our history of avoiding a church-like institution. The reasons may be obvious, that we don't want the rigidity and authority that a church might bring and that we want nothing that an institution might erect to stand between us and the revelatory truths of *The Urantia Book*.

But in avoiding churchiness, we have created a need to make up for what churches can provide. Churches have done well in creating a sense of community, of friendship and acceptance, of a place where people can worship together. Perhaps most of all they provide stability. If I don't go to that beautiful, stain-glassed building on the corner this Sunday, I still know that other people will and that it will be there with services next Sunday as well as the Sunday after that. We cannot necessarily say that about our study groups. Perhaps someday we will evolve into that kind of institutional momentum borne of brick,

mortar, and stability, or perhaps we can partially fill this need for social support in our online meetings.

Meanwhile, study group leaders have to try a lot harder than they might have had to with a different structure, not only to expand the Revelation one group at a time but also to keep their own study groups vibrant and extant, to keep the light burning.

A close friend of mine, a stalwart and active reader, recently said to me, "You know, the Urantia movement just isn't very attractive." This person's statement had nothing to do with any of the specific organizations.

That statement shocked me somewhat, and I'm not sure that I agree with it.

Whatever its truth, however, this individual's perception can be a call for us to make the movement more attractive, whether we are describing study groups, seminars, local conferences, or international events.

Study group leaders need to be assertive, to reach out to potential readers, especially those who already have the book and have made contact, and to seek to bring them to the group. Our groups need to be welcoming, to be appealing, to be safe for someone new. They need to be places that showcase the truths and beauties of our unique Revelation, to be places of prayer and worship, but also to be places of friendship and community. Our meetings need to be where we can go to share and to break bread together.

Leaders must to reach out to readers they've heard of and to those they've not seen of late. The organizations need to help people find each other.

Conclusion

Despite the advantage we have of offering the fifth epochal revelation of truth to the world, our efforts are not producing the numbers we want in terms of the growth of active participants. We need to reach out to non-readers who have the potential to become readers, help current readers to become more involved, thorough, and in-depth students of the book, and encourage active readers to become contributors to outreach. We need to rededicate ourselves to a wise and spiritual mission of outreach and growth.

...There are three separate evidences of [the Thought Adjuster's] indwelling of the human mind:

1. Humanitarian fellowship—love.

2. Interpretation of the universe—wisdom.

3. Spiritual evaluation of life—worship. [Paper 196:3.6-9, page 2094:5-8]

Study groups are very, very important places and study group hosts are very, very important leaders in our pursuit of stronger community, progressing comprehension, and fuller and more real prayer and worship. ■

Another group has adapted what we call "Paper Topicals" instead of sequential reading; these require a focus but less preparation for the leader than would a conference workshop.

Parables as Inspirations for Study Groups

TONIA BANEY
USA



Linking study groups illustration

...the biblical story of Jesus' life is inspiring and holds many souls within God's hands.

JESUS ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT THE PERSON in front of him was most important and over the years I have tried to learn that lesson. And so I welcome all of you as the most important people!

When Jesus walked the earth there was no way he could teach outright truths to those around him. There were spies everywhere and in order to actually fulfill his life's work he had to somehow hide the meanings of his teachings so that they would only make sense to those who were spiritually inclined...therefore he spoke in parables which we will discuss this morning.

As we explore parables, think how difficult it was for Jesus and the apostles to actually tell the truth about the love and the presence of our Father. If he had not resorted to parables his work would have been cut shorter than it was by his arrest and crucifixion. By the time Jesus ascended to his Father, his work was finished and our lowly planet was known throughout his universe.

"He who has ears to hear, let him hear." [Paper 151:1.2, page 1689:0] One of my favorite quotes.

If you recall, Jesus informed the apostles that those who were seeking to destroy them and those who would never understand the parables anyway, would be blocked from understanding the mysteries of the kingdom. **"...those who listen only to ensnare us may be more confounded in that they will see without seeing and will hear without hearing..."** [Paper 151:1.4, page 1689:2]

How many of you here today have tried to introduce the Urantia teachings to friends and relatives?

How many of you have succeeded?

Difficult isn't it?

Do you end up thinking to yourself; "If I only knew the book better I could do a better job of this?"

Well, you are not alone.

Jesus knew it all and he resorted to parables knowing that only those who were searching for the presence of God and had an open mind would understand his truth.

Jesus found it much more difficult than we do today as he was being pursued by spies and enemies of the truth. They knew that if Jesus' teachings were spread abroad, they, the scribes, the Pharisees and the priesthood would lose their power as they held the Jews in bondage of ritualism and legalism, which was much more difficult for the Jews than that of the Roman political rule.

Jews were also held by the slavish laws of **traditions** which were part of every domain of personal and social life. These Jews could hardly ignore their sacred traditions for the teachings of Jesus who did not hesitate to ignore the dogmas which they regarded as having been ordained by Father

Abraham himself. **"...Moses had given them their law and they would not compromise."** [Paper 121:7.3, page 1340:2] 1340:2

We are fortunate. The Christian culture in which we live has upheld the word of God contained in *The Bible* for hundreds of years. Many today seek nothing more than *The Bible* which contains historical and religious information which is dated and in many ways inaccurate. But the biblical story of Jesus' life is inspiring and holds many souls within God's hands.

Do we have this same attitude today about this revelation? Do we try and influence those we love to read the fifth epochal revelation thinking they would be happier people if they knew what we know?

We who have read this book for many years have most likely tried everything! We have left quotes around on scraps of paper, and have inserted quotes in our family prayers before Christmas dinner, and have left the book in our living rooms, bedrooms, kitchens, and bathrooms! We have inserted quotes at the end of emails and Christmas cards!

So all my relatives have known about *The Urantia Book* for years, particularly since most of them visited 533 for several years! Is there another reader of *The Urantia Book* in my family besides my son and my grandchildren and of course Steve?

No, there is not, at least not that I know of.

But, they all believe in God and they pursue that goal by attending their chosen places of worship and trying to be good people. And in the end that is all God asks of us, is that we try.

So we as students of the Urantia teachings persevere and try to live the teachings and teach as we pass by as Jesus did. He left us a lot of clues in *The Urantia Book* on how to do that!

Jesus realized quite early in his ministry that whatever he did he would be attacked by those who did or would not understand. Therefore the parables came into being. Some are simple, others are difficult but all were and are important, just as important now as they were then.

To his apostles Jesus taught:

"In patience have I instructed you all this time. To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to the undiscerning multitudes and to those who seek our destruction, from now on, the mysteries of the kingdom shall be presented in parables. And this we will do so that those who really desire to enter the kingdom may discern the meaning of the teaching and thus find salvation, while those who listen only to ensnare us may be the more confounded in that they will see without seeing and will hear without hearing..." [Paper 151:1.4, page 1689:2]

Jesus also warned:

“...My children, do you not perceive the law of the spirit which decrees that to him who has shall be given so that he shall have an abundance; but from him who has not shall be taken away even that which he has. Therefore will I henceforth speak to the people much in parables to the end that our friends and those who desire to know the truth may find that which they seek, while our enemies and those who love not the truth may hear without understanding...” [Paper 151:1.4, page 1689:2]

“...Many of these people follow not in the way of the truth. The prophet did, indeed, describe all such undiscerning souls when he said: ‘For this people’s heart has waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed lest they should discern the truth and understand it in their hearts.’ [Paper 151:1.4, page 1689:2]

Is that as true today as it was then? With all of our media, communications, travel and other ways of getting together with friends, family and Urantia Book readers, why aren't we, as a spiritual population, doing better? Or are we doing better than we think? I think we are.

Readers all over the world are coming together as never before. Those of us who remember when there was no UAI and the in the past the Brotherhood was newly organized, celebrate this growth as being the beginning of the world wide organization of Urantia Book readers. It is small now but it will grow as the teachings continue to be communicated world wide.

How we teach new readers is important. The parables given to us in *The Urantia Book* are given for a reason; not only for the time when Jesus walked the planet but for now as well. We live on a multi-cultural planet and these teachings are meant for all man-kind. There will always be enemies of the revelation at least for the near future, so parables were and are essential, thus the several pages devoted to this subject.

- Jesus advised against the use of either fables or allegories in teaching the truths of the gospel. He did recommend **the free use of parables**, especially nature parables. He emphasized the value of utilizing the analogy existing between the natural and the spiritual worlds as a means of teaching truth. He frequently alluded to the natural as “the unreal and fleeting shadow of spirit realities.”

It is important for us to understand the value of parables and I think these following quotes help us to do that:

...In teaching the apostles the value of parables, Jesus called attention to the following points: [Paper 151:3.5, page 1692:4]

The parable provides for a simultaneous appeal to vastly different levels of mind and spirit. The parable stimulates the imagination, challenges the discrimination, and provokes critical thinking; it promotes sympathy without arousing antagonism. [Paper 151:3.6, page 1692:5]

This is very important as one needs sympathy when trying to tell a truth which may be difficult of understanding.

The parable proceeds from the things which are known to the discernment of the unknown. The parable utilizes the material and natural as a means of introducing the spiritual and the super material. [Paper 151:3.7, page 1692:6] (In other words we accept without question the natural aspect of the spiritual world...How wonderful)

Parables favor the making of impartial moral decisions. The parable evades much prejudice and puts new truth gracefully into the mind and does all this with the arousal of a minimum of the self-defense of personal resentment. [Paper 151:3.8, page 1692:7] (When you can avoid conflict when introducing a new concept of truth it is a gift!)

To reject the truth contained in parabolical analogy requires conscious intellectual action which is directly in contempt of one’s honest judgment and fair decision. The parable conduces to the forcing of thought through the sense of hearing. [Paper 151:3.9, page 1692:8]

The use of the parable form of teaching enables the teacher to present new and even startling truths while at the same time he largely avoids all controversy and outward clashing with tradition and established authority. [Paper 151:3.10, page 1692:9] (A story is always interesting and in our interest we many not perceive we are being educated as well!)

The parable also possesses the advantage of stimulating the memory of the truth taught when the same familiar scenes are subsequently encountered. [Paper 151:3.11, page 1693:1] (We have all experienced this sensation and instantly recognized truth!)

In this way Jesus sought to acquaint his followers with many of the reasons underlying his practice of increasingly using parables in his public teaching. [Paper 151:3.12, page 1693:2]

Toward the close of the evening’s lesson Jesus made his first comment on the parable of the sower. He said the parable referred to two things: [Paper 151:3.13, page 1693:3]

First, it was a review of his own ministry up to that time and a forecast of what lay ahead of him for the remainder of his life on earth.

And second, it was also a hint as to what the apostles and other messengers of the kingdom might expect in their ministry from generation to generation as time passed.

Jesus also resorted to the use of parables as the best possible refutation of the studied effort of the religious leaders at Jerusalem to teach that all of his work was done by the assistance of demons and the prince of devils. [Paper 151:3.14, page 1693:4]

The appeal to nature was in contravention of such teaching since the people of that day looked upon all natural phenomena as the product of the direct act of spiritual beings and supernatural forces.

He also determined upon this method of teaching because it enabled him to proclaim vital truths to those who desired to know the better way while at the same time affording his enemies less opportunity to find cause for offense and for accusations against him.

Before he dismissed the group for the night, Jesus said: ‘Now will I tell you the last of the parable of the sower. I would test you to know how you will receive this: [Paper 151:3.15, page 1693:5]

The kingdom of heaven is also like a man who cast good seed upon the earth; and while he slept by night and went about his business by day, the seed sprang up and grew, and although he knew not how it came about, the plant came to fruit. First there was the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And then when the grain was ripe, he put forth the sickle, and the harvest was finished.

“He who has an ear to hear, let him hear.”

Many times did the apostles turn this saying over in their minds, but the Master never made further mention of this addition to the parable of the sower. [Paper 151:3.16, page 1693:6]

Thank you.....Tonia Baney ■



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