

ON STUDY GROUPS

Use Group Processes

Study groups are now forming at an accelerated rate in many places, and we have been repeatedly requested for some guidelines on how to plan to study the URANTIA Book in small groups. Even though we know that each group will be different and that each will develop a distinctive style of its own, nevertheless we can list certain general guidelines which have evolved from the experiences of successful study groups.

The desire to have a study group must originate from the members themselves and never forced. We can come in to help only when requested.

From the beginning, the spirit of love, fellowship, joy and good cheer should prevail - without these, all else will be as "sounding brass and tinkling cymbals". All of those spiritual qualities so lauded in the URANTIA Book can be cultivated and evidenced in these small fellowship meetings. . .as well as elsewhere. (See attached example of one lesson.)

As study groups evolve the host or hostess will set the pattern and if desirable, appoint a different leader for each meeting. It has been found helpful to start out in a very simple way by each reading one section of a Paper. There are approximately 5-12 sections in each Paper, the average being 8-9. This is ideal for each reading and discussing a section at a time and it requires about an hour or so to complete a Paper in this manner. This simple method enables newcomers to feel at ease and even oldtimers will always benefit. As time goes on and the book becomes more familiar, topics may be assigned and references noted for special presentations. The danger here is that not enough time is left for participation which is the keynote of learning. However, the leader can carefully plan so that participation by every member is assured.

It is wise for the group to plan together on which Papers should be read and in what order so that members can study or read the Paper ahead of time and be ready with cross-references and other aids for discussion periods. A program could be duplicated for a three month period.

Remember that the URANTIA Book is the reason for meeting, so keep to this subject. This will be the leader's responsibility to see that the group does not digress at least until the social time at the close of the URANTIA Book study session.

It has been found helpful but not essential to have a chalkboard where certain notes or special information can be listed such as the assignment and leader for the day and for the next time. Or extra research or cross-references on the Paper being read can be noted. Also it is helpful to have maps, charts, and pictures to amplify certain lessons.

Martin W. Myers pointed out in his paper on "Unity, Not Uniformity" that: * "The early members of The URANTIA Movement were, and you are now, told: 'We are in association with a revelation of truth which is 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 its world-wide mission. In the meantime thousands of study groups must be brought into existence. Thus will the Book be in readiness to comfort and enlighten the peoples of the world 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.'" "

One of the purposes of our study groups, besides actually learning the URANTIA Book, is expressed on page 1130:3:*** "While your religion is a matter of personal experience, it is most important that you should be exposed to the knowledge of a vast number of other religious experiences (the diverse interpretations of other and diverse mortals) to the end that you may prevent your religious life from becoming egocentric-circumscribed, selfish, and unsocial."

Let us plan little study groups well and maintain a regular and consistent program. This is a good place to introduce newcomers to a group after they have met with individuals. (Each newcomer is assigned a friendly helper.)

I will be happy to meet with anyone wishing to form a study group and to answer any questions. Extra materials are available here.

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