

WHY A STUDY GROUP

Let us pause for a moment and try to gain an "unseen visitor's" view of our little study group and also to consider objectively some of the important reasons why we assemble to study together. Our "unseen friend" would know some of the problems and some of the values that come to us because we work and study together in a group.

Unseen Friends
 Pages 1241
 1255
 430
 432
 438

We realize that any one or more of a number of "unseen friends" might be here with us. Student visitors could be here, or it is quite possible that a midwayer or a member of the many groups of seraphim, cherubim and sanobim resident on our planet could drop in. For example, a social architect "labors to enhance all sincere social contacts." Isn't it good to know that we are in a friendly universe with the angels of heaven working to help us? If, perchance, one were here, what would he see?

He would see an extremely varied and heterogeneous group of plodding and sincere mortals — mortals way down at the bottom rung of the long ladder which evolutionary earthly animal origin beings must take, step by step, even to reach the beginning of the inward path to Havona. It is safe to say that no two of us have the same background or occupation. Our interests and hobbies vary so much that it is doubtful if we would ever have met, except for the blue Book. But we have the strongest of common bonds which unites us — we are all fellow searchers for TRUTH. Our common deep interest in the big blue Book testifies to that.

Learning and Working Together

Sometimes, it is a great temptation to reason that perhaps we could accomplish more by reading and studying alone at home and I believe that sooner or later everyone faces this question. Often in earlier days I thought that if I added up all the time traveling to and from meetings and the social times there, perhaps it would be better if I studied and read the Book at home, especially when one is so limited in precious time to study and read. But the Book tells us otherwise. All through its pages we are admonished to serve and to work with others. Listen to Rodan of Alexandria:

Great Spiritual Power in Working Together

"Isolation tends to exhaust the energy charge of the soul. Association with one's fellows is essential to the renewal of the zest for life and is indispensable to the maintenance of the courage to fight those battles consequent upon the ascent to the higher levels of human living. Friendship enhances the joys and glorifies the triumphs of life.....By intelligent symbols man is able to quicken and enlarge the appreciative capacities of his friends. One of the

crowning glories of human friendship is this power and possibility of the mutual stimulation of the imagination. Great spiritual power is inherent in the consciousness of wholehearted devotion to a common cause, mutual loyalty to a cosmic Deity."

Our Group Goal - Searching For God

Searching
for
Final
Values

What is our true purpose" in meeting together? What are we really doing? Though we have many contributory goals that main purpose is a statement or composite of our individual goals. We are searching for final values and for God. As Bill Sadler so often pointed out in the seminars and Marian Rowley stated in her Paper, the study of the Book is second. The truths it contains are important — they are the "everlasting truths". Jesus told us that our main purpose is to reveal God to man as his Father. Listen to this:

1593:6

"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."

In this search for final values we can help each other. Rodan of Alexandria tells us so beautifully that in the union of souls we can mobilize wisdom by uniting our views.

Values
of
Studying
Together

1776 #2

"Every human being sooner or later acquires a certain concept of this world and a certain vision of the next. Now it is possible through personality association to unite these views of temporal existence and eternal prospects. 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. Likewise, in the same way, man is enabled to avoid that ever-present tendency to fall victim to distortion of vision, prejudice of viewpoint and narrowness of judgment. Fear, envy and conceit can be prevented only by intimate contact with other minds.....and since wisdom is superknowledge, it follows that, in the union of wisdom, the social group, small or large, mutually shares all knowledge."

1289:3

"The search for God is the unstinted bestowal of love attended by amazing discoveries of new and greater love to be bestowed."

We see that we cannot search for God and live and work alone. Again and again Jesus admonishes us that we can only learn and serve by working with our fellow men. Other authors in the

Book give us the same type of admonishments. Here is one given by a Mighty Messenger temporarily residing on Urantia:

Love of
Fellows
Shows
Love
of the
Father

1289:4

"All true love is from God and man receives the divine affection as he himself bestows this love upon his fellows. Love is dynamic. It can never be captured; it is alive, free, thrilling and always moving. Man can never take the love of the Father and imprison it within his heart. The Father's love can become real to mortal men only by passing through that man's personality as he in turn bestows this love upon his fellows."

So it appears that our first lesson in our search for God is "to love one another." That is a pleasant lesson especially in this group as we can do that just naturally. We can truly learn to love one another.

Love
All
Men

But that isn't all we are told to do. We are advised to "love all men." We know from the URANTIA Book and from modern psychology that if we fully understand men and why they act as they do — the true causes and background of their actions, we can then become compassionate and loving. We see examples of this daily at school. Some little eight year old boy may be so obstreperous that the teacher will tell me she can't "stand him another minute." He kicks, he strikes out at every one. Then when we carefully check his background and home life we find an alcoholic mother, a father who is gone all the time. The child has never known love and attention. He is kicking out against life. Now that the teacher knows all that, she becomes patient, she gives him attention, she loves him because she understands. You know what this does for the child. He in turn learns to love. He blossoms and changes. Oh, the great power of love!

It is pointed out many times in the Book that the results of studying and working together total far more than the sum of the parts. Here, for example, Malavatia Melchizedek tells us:

Quadruple
Attainment

494 #7

"Intellectually, socially and spiritually two moral creatures do not merely double their personal potentials of universe achievement by partnership technique, they more nearly quadruple their attainment and accomplishment possibilities."

We know from other quotations that this mathematical progression goes on and on as members of a group work together.

Again we find that by working together in our search for God, we help each other. Rodan of Alexandria calls working together "The enhanced defense against evil."

Working Together Insurance Against Evil

1776 #4

"Personality association and mutual affection is an efficient insurance against evil. Difficulties, sorrow, disappointment and defeat are more painful and disheartening when borne alone. Association does not transmute evil into righteousness, but it does aid greatly in lessening the sting. Said your Master, "Happy are they who mourn"— if a friend is at hand to comfort. There is positive strength in the knowledge that you live for the welfare of others and that these others likewise live for your welfare and advancement. Man languishes in isolation. Human beings unfailingly become discouraged when they view only the transitory transactions of time.....only a glimpse of the circle of eternity can inspire man to do his best and challenge the best in him to do its utmost. And when man is thus at his best he lives most unselfishly for the good of others, his fellow sojourners in time and eternity."

We can strive for the training given on Mansion World # 4.

New Social Order

536:5

"It is during this period of training that ascending mortals are really first introduced to the demands and delights of true social life.....social activities which are predicated neither on personal aggrandizement nor on self-seeking conquest. A new social order is being introduced, one based on the understanding sympathy of mutual appreciation and unselfish love of mutual service and the overmastering motivation of the realization of a common and supreme destiny — the Paradise goal of worshipful and divine perfection."

And while we are developing these abilities of working and serving together we find we can check our progress. Note Jesus' words:

Degree of Love for Fellows

1642:3

".....There is a practical method of discovering the degree to which you have yielded the control of your soul powers to the teaching and guidance of this indwelling spirit of the heavenly Father and that is the degree of your love for your fellow men. This spirit of the Father partakes of the love of the Father and as it dominates man, it unfailingly leads in the directions of divine worship and loving regard for one's fellows..... Every earth child who follows the leading of this spirit shall eventually know the will of God, and he who surrenders to the will of God shall abide forever."

Sometimes we become temporarily discouraged. We may not keep our goal firmly in view or we may not learn as fast as we would wish. Then we can heed the words of a Mighty Messenger temporarily residing on Urantia:

Increases
Comprehension
Capacity

1289:3

"Men all too often forget that God is the greatest experience in human existence. Other experiences are limited in their nature and content, but the experience of God has no limits save those of the creature's comprehension capacity and this very experience is in itself capacity enlarging. When men search for God, they are searching for everything. When they find God, they have found everything."

And here we are in our little study group working for that very purpose. It seems to be one theme throughout the Book that in order to achieve we must serve and we must work together. A Mighty Messenger visiting on Urantia wrote the following in collaboration with the vicegerent Planetary Prince:

Become
Server
of All

647

648

"Self-realization is potentially evil if it is antisocial. It is literally true: "No man lives by himself." Cosmic socialization constitutes the highest form of personality unification. Said Jesus: "He who would be greatest among you, let him become server of all." "As this love-comprehension of Deity finds spiritual expression in the lives of God-knowing mortals, there are yielded the fruits of divinity: intellectual peace, social progress, moral satisfaction, spiritual joy, and cosmic wisdom... Love is the greatest thing in the universe — and God is love."

"Love is the desire to do good to others."

311 #3
312:2
1088:9
1090 #5
1091:2
1092:3
1095:4
1130:3-4

Julia K. Fenderson
For Study Group

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.

Love
and
Fellow-
ship

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.)

Simple
Pattern
at
First

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.

Plan
Ahead

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.

Stick
to
URANTIA
Book

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.

Chalk-
board
Charts
Maps

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.

Goal: Thousands of Study Groups
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.'"

Avoid Tunnel Vision
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."

Keep Regular Meetings
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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