

Living the Teachings

A “QUICK-START” GUIDE

The “LIVING THE TEACHINGS” group model is safe, loving, nurturing, and more spiritually progressive than any group process most of us have known. The key element is a singleness of purpose, that of helping one another live at a higher level. To be successful and pleasant for all, there can be no competitiveness, nor secondary agendas.

EVERYTHING WE SUGGEST here was arrived at by trial and error. In the process of creating a Living the Teachings group we had attempted open study group-type meetings for a year, meetings patterned after AA step programs, and other formats. None of these worked well with Urantians. Then, at last, we arrived at the pattern that worked for us.

Start with a small, closed group

Several years ago we discovered that we had a nucleus of a few kindred spirits who were still interested in the idea of a spiritual group dynamic for the teachings of the Urantia Papers. And this is the first suggestion: *Begin with a small group that is compatible and willing to learn from one another.*

Establish a time frame of commitment, say six months or a year. Unless everyone agrees on adding a new member—maintain a closed group. You will discover that a trusting, sharing group suffers from casual drop-ins or curiosity seekers. We discovered that eight or so people is about maximum. We meet on Sunday mornings, and have juggled the time several times to meet the needs of members.

Your group will develop its own personality, and begin to have a life of its own. The group dynamic and wisdom will establish its own “rules,” so to speak.

The basic format we use

We have learned it is best to begin with a moment of silence, and a prayer offered by a member. This sets the tone of the meeting. We do not read any “rules” or guidelines, since we are all committed to living the teachings of the Urantia Papers. We are all there to seek to live at a higher level.

Each Living the Teachings group will have a de facto leader, or facilitator who orchestrates things. This is *not* a guru, but rather an individual who wants to serve the group and keep things running smoothly.

The central concept of the group is a process of sharing our inner lives with one another. After a moment of silence and a prayer, we begin sharing what we have experienced in our spiritual lives for the previous week. This group sharing is casual and takes about an hour or so of our two hour meeting. We do not rush it. We may talk about our failures or successes in living the teachings, our progress in prayer and meditation, a troublesome problem, or an individual who is a spiritual challenge.

Don’t comment or give advice

Discourage casual comments after someone shares. Advice should never be given unless it is specifically asked for. Just thank the person who shares and wait for a volunteer to share next. At first you will discover that people are reticent, and won’t have a great deal to say. Or they will tend to talk about theories and generalities, and avoid openly discussing their inner life. This is quite natural. We are not accustomed to discussing our spiritual struggles openly. Over time, as trust develops, this will become less and less of a problem. A good leader should set the

example of candor and courage. *But most of all, the facilitator must create a safe group.*

Create a supportive and loving space

Be very careful who you invite to your group. You must get the right people on the bus from the very beginning. The key factor is to invite people with a sincere desire to learn to live in the presence of God, and people who do not have other agendas.

After each member shares, the leader may elect to establish a topic related to living in the presence, according to the will of God. The balance of the meeting could be open discussion around this topic. We can provide discussion ideas and supportive quotes from the Papers if you wish. The structure, method or technique of the meeting does not matter so much as the loving atmosphere the group generates.

The important thing is to make the ambiance of the meeting loving, safe, and fun. Our meetings have spiritual goals and use spiritual methods. We found it best to avoid too much psychological theory. Guided meditations, when we use them, are lifting and fresh, and use wholesome images and symbols to stimulate the creative imagination to worship.

We have a rule that we are not to interrupt anyone who is talking. This has required, at times, the use of a “talking stone” which is passed from member to member. Only the person with the stone can talk. As written previously, do not offer advice after someone speaks unless it is specifically asked for. We do not critique the views of someone. Cross talk is not encouraged.

The principle here is that we are all spiritual equals. We are experts in only one person’s inner life, our own. There should be no “wannabe” gurus in the group. Each individual must feel safe to speak without fear of a subtle, judgmental response. Of all the “rules” we suggest, the “no advice unless requested” is perhaps the most important. The rest of the structure of the meeting depends upon who is leading it.

It is a good idea to alternate leaders, unless a topic is carried forward and the group agrees to keep the same leader for two or three, or even more meetings. (*We recently spent six weeks on meditation techniques, with a group leader who was especially knowledgeable about it.*)

Problems and problem members

This kind of spiritual dialogue is not for everyone. It is not harmonious with the competitive intellectual arena that some Urantians, especially males, seem to enjoy.

Some people don’t like to share their inner lives and are embarrassed to do so. Although we all share certain deep spiritual hungers and longings, modern men and women are conditioned to avoid discussion about them; it is virtually a “forbidden dialogue.” For this reason, if there is not a good “fit” for a member, it is better to let this individual go and form his or her own group along the lines they like. We all have different perspectives, and it is advisable that those who have similar perspectives and problems form their own groups. Limited, closed groups make membership precious, and each member of a group should wholeheartedly participate, or make room for someone else.

The Cascading Premises

The ten cascading premises that follow are not “steps.” They are premises drawn from the Urantia Papers. They provide a philosophic foundation for the Living the Teachings process. Although they will help the spiritual life of anyone, these cascading premises are by no means the only arrangement or conclusions that could be developed through the Papers. Without question, Jesus offered a method of spiritual growth that was unlike any other, before or since his time. These Cascading Premises are intended to suggest one possible path toward understanding the religious life of Jesus and how Jesus lived it, and how we—as Urantian Believers—are called upon to develop and live our own religious lives.

[1]. “Of all human knowledge, that which is of greatest value is to know the religious life of Jesus and how he lived it.” [2090]

[2]. “The secret of his unparalleled religious life was this consciousness of the presence of God; and he attained it by intelligent prayer and sincere worship--unbroken communion with God—and not by leadings, voices, visions, or extraordinary religious practices.” [2089]

[3]. “Whence then comes the energy to do these great things? Look to your Master. Even now he is out in the hills taking in power while we are here giving out energy. The secret of all this problem is wrapped up in spiritual communion, in worship. From the human standpoint it is a question of combined meditation and relaxation. Meditation makes the contact of mind with spirit; relaxation determines the capacity for spiritual receptivity. And this interchange of strength for weakness, courage for fear, the will of God for the mind of self, constitutes worship. At least, that is the way the philosopher views it.” [Rodan speaking] [1777]

[4]. “But . . . mistakes of the intellect in no way interfered with the believer's great progress in growth in spirit. In less than a month after the bestowal of the Spirit of Truth, the apostles made more individual spiritual progress than during their almost four years of personal and loving association with the Master. [2061]

[5]. “Before Pentecost the apostles had given up much for Jesus. They had sacrificed their homes, families, friends, worldly goods, and positions. At Pentecost they gave themselves to God, and the Father and the Son responded by giving themselves to man--sending their spirits to live within men. This experience of losing self and finding the spirit was not one of emotion; it was an act of intelligent self-surrender and unreserved consecration.” [2089]

[6]. “Thus it appears that the Spirit of Truth comes really to lead all believers into all truth, into the expanding knowledge of the experience of the living and growing spiritual consciousness of the reality of eternal and ascending sonship with God. Do not make the mistake of expecting to become strongly intellectually conscious of the outpoured Spirit of Truth. The spirit never creates a consciousness of himself, only a consciousness of Michael, the Son. From the beginning Jesus taught that the spirit would not speak of himself. The proof, therefore, of your fellowship with the Spirit of Truth is not to be found in your consciousness of this spirit but rather in your experience of enhanced fellowship with Michael.” [2061]

[7]. “There must come a revival of the actual teachings of Jesus, such a restatement as will undo the work of his early followers who went about to create a sociophilosophical system of belief regarding the fact of Michael's sojourn on earth.” [2089]

[8]. “Christianity has indeed done a great service for this world, but what is now most needed is Jesus. The world needs to see Jesus living again on earth in the experience of spirit-born mortals who effectively reveal the Master to all men. It is futile to talk about a revival of primitive Christianity; you must go forward from where you find yourselves. Modern culture must become spiritually baptized with a new revelation of Jesus' life and illuminated with a new understanding of his gospel of eternal salvation. And when Jesus becomes thus lifted up, he will draw all men to himself. Jesus' disciples should be more than conquerors, even overflowing sources of inspiration and enhanced living to all men. Religion is only an exalted humanism until it is made divine by the discovery of the reality of the presence of God in personal experience.” [2084]

[9]. We believe this series of quotes suggest one way the Urantia Revelation could: “flash upon earth in the lives of the men who reveal God to their fellows.” This also is a basis of the “new and everlasting religion . . . this new way of salvation, the revelation of God to man through, and in, Jesus . . . When man goes in partnership with God, great things may, and do, happen.” [1467]

[10]. “You may *preach* a religion *about* Jesus, but, perforce, you must *live* the religion *of* Jesus” [2091]