

LIVING THE TEACHINGS

A Talk for the Arizona Urantia Fellowship
By Larry Mullins, May 7, 2005

Good evening.

Let's take a moment to thank Jesus for being with us tonight. Let's feel his presence and ask for his grace.

Tonight I am going to talk about a different kind of Urantia meeting. Here is a statistic I believe you will find interesting. The Fellowship reports that if the number of Urantians who fall asleep in meetings were laid end to end ... they would be more comfortable.

Its true.

And tonight I am going to suggest you try a new kind of Urantia meeting. We call it Living the Teachings. It is my hope that at least one or two Urantians here in this room tonight will be interested in exerting the leadership and effort it takes to start a Living the Teachings group here in Phoenix.

But, on a deeper level, what I really want to talk about is transforming the world. Nothing less than creating the future. Tuning into the flow of the will of God. I want to talk about creating a different kind of future because Jesus of Nazareth told us how to do that in the Urantia revelation.

When the United States of America was born, Thomas Paine made this statement: "We have it in our power to begin the world again. A situation similar to the present has not appeared since the time of Noah until now. The birthday of the new world is at hand." Doesn't that sound like something Jesus might have said about the revelation he originally made to our world?

And, maybe I'm stretching it, but could that not be said about the Urantia Papers themselves? ***"You have it in your power to begin the world again. A situation similar to this has not occurred since Jesus walked the earth. The birthday of a new world is at hand."***

Now, I agree that progress has been slow. But, has not America has also made slow progress? Thomas Paine made his statement back in 1775. Of course, it didn't happen overnight. The truth that "All men are created equal" appeared in our Declaration of Independence, but not in our Constitution. Women would not get the vote for 150 years. And blacks would suffer de facto disenfranchisement for almost fifty more years.

So, we can forgive the fact that the Urantia revelation has made slow progress. But, while we are watching the paint dry, perhaps there are things we can do that will make a difference. A few years ago, Joan and I began a Living the Teachings group in Boulder. We don't just read or quote from the Urantia Papers in that group. We talk about our successes and failures in actually *following* the Master. Unfortunately, we have all had more failures than successes in following these teachings. *Living* the Teachings is much more difficult than *talking* about them, or *reading* about them, or *believing* them. But we are a work in progress, and we are still meeting and striving. Our Living the Teachings group has helped both Joan and myself immensely. One reason for its success is that Jesus always attends our meetings. Always. I know this is an extravagant claim to make, but it is true. And, because Jesus attends every meeting, something magical *always* takes place.

I promise, if you will try a Living the Teachings group of your own, Jesus will attend it. And the magic will somehow happen. I don't know how it works, but it always does. The great psychologist, Carl Jung, had an interesting sign above the door of his home in Germany. It was in Latin, but it meant: "Evoked or not, God is always present."

The concept is very simple. We get together for a couple of hours every two weeks. And we share. We talk about our inner lives, and our successes and failures in living the teachings of Jesus. We have been doing this for over seven years now. There are only five in our group, but all of us have individually made some progress. Some might say, amazing progress.

We always end our meetings with a short guided worshipful meditation. At the end of my talk Joan will lead us through one of these meditations to give you the idea. Then we will hand out some guidelines for our meetings. But for now I want to give you the basic idea in broad strokes.

You may be wondering: *why do we Urantians need yet another kind of group?* What's wrong with our study groups? Nothing, really. Joan and I also host a weekly youth group who are reading the Book from beginning to end. It's wonderful. The oldest youth there is 21, Michelle, my daughter. Michelle is now a senior at CU, with a 3.9 something grade average and she is going for a Master's degree in Japanese. But, back to our group. We love hosting this study group, and we are now well into the Jesus papers. However, Joan and I decided long ago that even though study groups are stimulating, we needed something more. Why? Because we came to the conclusion that we, and too many other Urantians, had fallen into an intellectual trap. We read and talk about the teachings of the Urantia Papers but we had made very little progress in living

them. So we came to the conclusion we needed a new way to actually challenge us live the teachings.

This problem of wanting to talk the talk and forgetting to walk the walk is not uncommon in organizations. Someone once defined an organization as a small group of people who do things surrounded by a large group of people who stand around and complain about the people who are doing things. But, that is another subject.

To illustrate what I mean about talking the talk and forgetting to walk the walk, I will tell you a story about another revelation. It's known as the Legend of the Crystal Wall. As the story goes, there was once a Land of Misery, and a Land of Bliss. The people in the Land of Misery suffered greatly, and they naturally wanted to live in the Land of Bliss. But there was a towering Crystal Wall that separated the two lands and prevented the people from leaving. The wall was so high that only the birds could soar above it and find freedom and peace in the Land of Bliss.

One day a Great Teacher came to the Land of Misery. It did not seem possible, but he claimed that he had come from the Land of Bliss. He began to instruct the people in the Land of Misery that there was a way to defeat the Crystal Wall and reach the Land of Bliss. He claimed that, with a little help, people could actually learn to soar over the wall and escape the Land of Misery. But most people scoffed at this idea. The experts and authorities were especially scornful.

It came to pass that this teacher placed an open box of materials in the central gathering place of the Land of Misery. He told the people, as they gathered round, that with these commonplace materials, and some courage and faith, any ordinary man or woman could fly over the wall. Some of the elders and authorities looked over the materials. "Hah!" they scoffed. "There is nothing new here," said one. "This science is hopelessly outdated," said another. "He has plagiarized the writings of other teachers," said a third. And on and on.

But the Great Teacher was a patient and determined young man. The people watched as he began putting together the materials in the box: pieces of sailcloth, cords, sticks, and various fasteners. When he was finished, he called out: "***Follow me.***" Several curious people did follow him as he took his strange apparatus to a nearby towering slope near the highest mountain in the Land of Misery. They watched in astonishment as he ran down the slope, and once more called out: "***Follow me!***" Then, they gasped as he leaped off into the air! But, instead of falling, he began to sail effortlessly in the trackless blue sky. Then his paraglider began to rise higher and higher it great wide circles, the way they had seen the birds sailing.

Unfortunately, evil eyes were also watching the aggressive young man. The men who dominated the Land of Misery had been observing him carefully. They had a plan to set into motion should the self-assured young man get too far out of line. Suddenly, from some unseen place an arrow flew through the air. The people watched in horror as the arrow pierced the heart of the Great Teacher. He had, by this time, risen very high in the sky, and had actually sailed over the Crystal Wall. But now, his body tumbled from his craft and disappeared to human eyes somewhere in the Land of Bliss.

The craft itself continued to sail for a few minutes, and then began to drop. As luck would have it, it dropped within the Crystal Wall into the Land of Misery. Immediately the miraculous craft was recovered by the authorities. And disputes arose about who owned it. The disputing parties were generally divided into three camps, the scientists, the philosophers, and the sages and religious visionaries. The debate raged on and on. After a few hundred years, the scientists issued a press release:

“We have come to the conclusion that this craft is composed of commonplace materials. There is no hard evidence that it has actually flown. Superstition has created the myth about the so-called “Great Teacher.” Likewise, we find no proof that there is some mysterious, lifting force that will carry this craft over the Crystal Wall. Our instruments detect no such force, and we cannot accept the claims of those who gave testimony that they saw the event.” After releasing this statement, the scientists lost interest in the craft. Soon after this, most of the philosophers decided to give up on the strange craft. One said: “Although the existence of this mysterious force cannot be disproved, neither can it be proven. The domain of such perplexing, nonmaterial concepts is really that of the religionists.”

The religionists, sages and gurus had long held sway over the people in the Land of Misery. They held their ground about the powers of the craft, but their influence had grown weaker and weaker. Meanwhile, the scientists were producing one wonderful invention after another. “Science works!” became the mantra of the new scientists. Even so, the scientists still had no clue about how to break through the Crystal Wall and free the people. By now though, it had been in place so long that people took it for granted.

Left alone with the craft of the Great Teacher, the sages and religionists began to argue among themselves. They took the craft apart, analyzed it, and finally they sealed it in a sacred shrine. More than a thousand years went by, and the priests could no longer remember how the craft was configured. Various factions sprang up. They speculated a great deal about the “Great Teacher,” about who he was, where he really came from, and what really happened to him. The

craft, and the message, “*follow me*” was all but forgotten. No authority dared to actually attempt to fly the craft. In fact, many religious experts came to a remarkable conclusion. They decided that it was not necessary to risk a flight over the wall anyway. The Great Teacher had already accomplished that. These experts claimed that all one had to do was to *believe* that the Great Teacher had died to free the people of the Land of Misery. If an individual declared this belief according to a proper ritual, he or she would be saved. When such a person died, they would wake up on the other side of the Crystal Wall in the Land of Bliss and be with the Great Teacher.

There were hundreds of other ideas about the Great Teacher. A few interesting ideas even developed around the components of the craft he had built. But almost nothing was said or taught about the craft itself, or how it was used. In the meantime, the craft and the “*follow me*” message of the Great Teacher were all but forgotten. Like a magnificent butterfly, it seemed to be waiting for a time when some future generation of men and women would reassemble it and dare to use it. Two thousand years went by, and nothing much happened. Then, a small group of people made a monumental discovery.

They found a mysterious Blue Book somewhere in the Land of Misery. No one really knew for certain where it came from. The book itself claimed to have been authored by beings from the Land of Bliss. Moreover, the book declared that it contained the original information about how the craft of the Great Teacher was put together! This revelation pointed out the errors of the religionists who had lost the message of the Great Teacher: “*Follow me.*” It told how these well-meaning believers had created a religion ABOUT the Great Teacher, and lost the religion OF the Great Teacher. The people who found this book were overjoyed. At last the revelation of the Great Teacher could be given to the people of the Land of Misery. At last the people could be free of the bondage of superstition, and materialism, and the tyranny of self-proclaimed gurus and special people with secret information!

But, alas, these well-meaning people with this wonderful revelation for humankind had different ideas about who had authority over the Book, who owned it, and how best the new revelation should be presented. They began to break up into still more factions. First, there were the **Bookists**, who believed everyone needed a copy of the Blue Book so that *they* could learn about the message of the Great Teacher and *they* follow his teachings. There were the **Buriests**, who wanted to bury the Blue Book so no one could change its great message and future generations could follow the teachings of the Book. Then came the **Channelists**, who claimed to be in contact with celestial government that ruled the earth. They wanted to add new information they claimed they were getting from on high that would complete the revelation. There were also

the **Bashists**, who claimed that a human had obviously edited the Blue Book and made changes, so we had to pick and choose what parts of it we could believe. Another group was the **Nitpickists**, who spent untold hours finding what they perceived were factual errors in the Blue Book. And, of course the **Antiplagerists** who claimed the Blue Book was simply a compilation of material stolen from other sources. Finally, there were the **Anything-gozers** who embraced anyone and everyone who happened to carry a Blue Book around.

In fact, all manner of self-proclaimed special people sprang up, and soon a religion about the Blue Book was established. Unfortunately, few people in the Land of Misery were interested in this strange religion about this strange book and all the strange BlueBookists who were constantly fighting with each other.

Now, I don't want to imply that I have all the answers, nor that any of these factions are wrong in what they believe. I have no idea whether what they believe is true or not. It doesn't really matter what we believe. Did I say that?

It really doesn't matter what we believe.

For a long time nearly everyone believed the world was flat. That didn't change anything. **What matters is how we live.** Because the religion of Jesus, according to the Urantia Papers, is not something to be believed. It is not something to be discussed and read about, or amended by celestial decree. *The religion of Jesus is something that can only be lived.* Think of Mother Teresa. I believe she had a lot of her theology is all wrong, I believe mine is better. But Mother Teresa lived the Religion of Jesus far better than I could ever dream of doing. I have always loved her wonderful decree, "We cannot do great things, we can only do ordinary things with great love." It is said that once a business man told her, "You couldn't pay me enough to do what you do for the poor." To which Mother Teresa answered: "Me either."

This distinction between what we say we believe and the way we live is very important. Because, if the religion of Jesus is something to be believed, or read, or talked about, it would not be so difficult. However, if the religion of Jesus is something to be lived, it becomes a very different proposition. If we are to actually pick up our individual crosses and **follow** the Master, then we are confronted with a very different question. But how is it that so many Urantians have come to create comfortable religions *about* this amazing Book? And, how is it possible to create a religion about a Book when the Book itself declares that the religion of Jesus is the religion of *personal experience* and it cannot be taught, it must be lived? A book that urges us to follow Jesus, not to just read and talk about him.

But modern men and women are uncomfortable with the radical idea of believing *as* Jesus believed and serving as Jesus served. Most of us, even long time readers, react as Nalda did when she met Jesus. Remember Nalda? The story of Nalda at the well is, in many ways, the story of how too many of us back away from the greatest treasure ever offered human kind: the religion of Jesus. Let's revisit that story. Nalda was an attractive Samaritan woman. Jesus wanted a drink but he had no way to get water out of the well. So when Nalda approached with her pitcher to draw water from the well, he asked her to give him a drink. Nalda was startled, because in those days a self-respecting man did not speak to women in public, much less would it be proper for a Jew to speak to a Samaritan woman. Unfortunately, Nalda thought this attractive Jewish man was flirting with her. But soon Nalda realized that she had mistaken Jesus' kindness, and she was completely baffled by the unusual man before her. The Urantia Papers tell us that the "better side" of Nalda was awakened when Jesus said to her: **"Better it would be if you would cease to trifle with my words and seek for the living water which I have this day offered you."**

Nalda was embarrassed that she had spoken in the manner she did to Jesus. She said: "My Lord, I repent of my manner of speaking to you, for I perceive that you are a holy man or maybe a prophet." **And she was just about to seek direct and personal help from the Master when she did what so many have done before and since—dodged the issue of personal salvation by turning to the discussion of theology and philosophy.**

This is the key phrase in the Urantia Papers: **"she was just about to seek direct and personal help from the Master when she did what so many have done before and since—dodged the issue of personal salvation by turning to the discussion of theology and philosophy."** She quickly turned the conversation from her own needs to a theological controversy. Pointing over to Mount Gerizim, she continued: *"Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and yet you would say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship; which, then, is the right place to worship God?"*

Of course, Jesus saw through this ploy. The papers tell us he **perceived the attempt of the woman's soul to avoid direct and searching contact with its Maker.** However, Jesus also saw that there was present in her soul **a desire to know the better way of life.** So he told her to receive into her own heart **"this living water which I am offering you even now."** But Nalda makes yet another effort to avoid the discussion of the embarrassing question of her personal life on earth and the status of her soul before God. Once more she resorted to theological questions, saying: *"Yes, I know, Sir, that John has preached about the coming of the Converter, he who will*

be called the Deliverer, and that, when he shall come, he will declare to us all things” —and Jesus, interrupting Nalda, said with startling assurance, **“I who speak to you am he.”**

This was the first direct, positive, and undisguised pronouncement of his divine nature and sonship which Jesus had made on earth. And it was made to a Samaritan woman, a human soul who desired salvation, desired it sincerely and wholeheartedly, and that was enough.

Why do I tell you this story? Because I believe, just as Nalda, too many Urantians have avoided the central message and the mission of the Urantia Papers. Like Nalda, too many Urantian leaders point in every direction but their own hearts.

After you really study the Urantia Papers, you come to the conclusion that **the more we know and understand about the Urantia Papers, the more we are aware that we have barely scratched the surface.** At least many of us have come to that conclusion.

But are the Urantia Papers true? I believe they are true. However, I will agree that the premises upon which the Papers are based are extravagant, and challenging beyond measure.

We are told that a pre-existent being from another dimension ventured out from Paradise on a mission (along with our Mother Spirit) into the imperfection of time and space 400 billion years ago. His mission was to create, in this evolutionary time and space, a universe based upon the central core of divine perfection. Then, two thousand years ago, he set into motion a task to save our planet. Disguised as an ordinary human being, this celestial entity entered into enemy territory to save his little lost planet of Urantia, to bind its wounds and bring it home. He set into motion a new order of humankind, a gospel of peace and freedom. Then he turned over the task of saving the planet over to ordinary human minds and hearts to complete. Of course, our Creator Son knew that if human beings were left alone to accomplish this task, the earth would soon degenerate into chaos. But, according to the Papers, human beings are endowed with a priceless gift, a fragment of God, to help them. Humans are also provided all manner of invisible helpers and spiritual forces to assist them, and the Master himself has sent his Spirit of Truth to live in human hearts and guide them to all truth.

Clearly, the Urantia Papers describe the task that Jesus began and turned over to human minds to complete. Update all of the science, and the message is unchanged.

Jesus still lives, and he still can do amazing things. ***But Jesus can only live and do wonderful things through human beings who are dedicated to the Master’s religion of doing the will of the Father and unselfishly serving their brothers and sisters..*** Other than that, we are told not to attempt to put any limits on the spiritual power of Jesus’ Spirit of Truth.

Once more, with the caveat that I am just scratching the surface of the deeper meanings contained in the Urantia Papers, I believe they are a description of the awesome enterprise our Creator Son set into motion 400 billion years ago. As part of his mission, he came to Urantia and walked the dusty roads of Israel as a mortal being. He then entrusted the completion of the task of saving our planet to human hearts and minds.

I stand here before you with utter certainty that what I am saying resonates within the hearts of many of you. Phoenix has always been ahead of the curve as a leader in doing the work of the revelation. I know that many of you recall some wonderful moments we shared in the early days. I won't begin naming names, but it was from Phoenix that the most energetic support for freeing the revelation came. Phoenix was the first Society to be formed after the break between the Brotherhood and the Foundation. From Phoenix came leadership to interface with the Spanish-speaking community. As a matter of fact, Eric Cosh came up to Boulder from this community to learn more about the Living the Teachings concept. It was his idea to set up a website, which we are in the process of doing.

It was said that the members of the contact commission were told that they might live and die without knowing that they were laying the foundations for a new religious renaissance on our planet. And so it may be with all of us here in this room. But perhaps, like Camelot, we can take solace in the knowledge that at least some of what we did, and what we tried to do, will be remembered.

John Kennedy loved that final scene in the musical Camelot. King Arthur had strived to bring a new order of goodness and peace to the world, only to see it all come apart. At the end of the play, Arthur stands alone on the battlefield, lamenting that the golden days of Camelot had ended, and the fact that he must go to battle with those he loves.

As the story goes, a youth appears and tells Arthur that he wants to be a knight and fight in this battle. Arthur tells him, "What do you know of Knighthood?" and the young man replies: "Oh everything. I know from the stories that people tell." Arthur is amazed. "From the stories people tell, you know about knighthood and you want to be a knight?" "Oh yes!" the youth replies.

But Arthur thinks for a moment, and then tells him: "No. You will not fight in this battle. You go behind the lines and hide there until it is over. Then you will make your way back to England, alive ... to grow up and grow old. And you will do as I your king commands you. Each evening, from December to December ... before you drift to sleep upon your cot, think back of

all the tales that you remember, of Camelot. Ask every person if he's heard the story, and tell it strong and clear if he has not, that once there was a fleeting wisp of glory, called Camelot.

"Now, say it out with love and joy!" "Camelot! Camelot!"

"Yes, Camelot, my boy. Where the rain it never fell till after sundown. By eight am the morning fog had flown. Don't let it be forgot, that once there was a spot, for one brief shining moment, that was known as Camelot!" Arthur then knights the youth and the boy runs off to fulfill his mission.

A general then approaches Arthur. "What are you doing Arthur? We have a battle to fight!" And Arthur replies: "I have won my battle! What we did, what we tried to do, will be remembered." Pointing to the direction where the young man had ran, the general asks: "Who was that?"

"Oh, only one of what we all are. Less than a drop in the great blue motion of the sunlit sea. But, it seems that some of those drops do sparkle! Some of them do sparkle!"

Perhaps it is appropriate to quote Jesus at this point. He said: "Do you not realize that the hope of a better nation – or a better world – is bound up in the progress and enlightenment of the individual?"

Many of you "drops" here in this room *have* sparkled over the years, and I salute you. But some here may yet wonder about something, as Joan and I did. Suppose we do take it to another level. Suppose, just suppose, without reservation, we meet together with no other mission than to call upon Jesus to help us transform our lives. Suppose, in our mind's eye, we see the living Jesus coming. And imagine that this time we did not run. We did not avert our eyes, even though we knew the living Jesus would not be content with simply rearranging the old familiar furniture of our souls and making us more comfortable. Even though we know he would tear out the rotten timbers of resentments and toss the baggage of vain regrets. Even though we know he will completely renovate our hearts and minds. Suppose we were able to allow him to do this, what real good would our small contribution do? What would it do for the revelation? What importance could our small voice, our "tiny drop on the great blue motion of the sunlit sea," our testimony, have against a world that seems to be overwhelmed by vanity and human folly?

The answer lies in one final story. It is a short story.

JOAN:

One winter's day a wild dove happened to land on a branch of a tree, and noticed a sparrow nearby. After a few moment's of silence, the sparrow addressed the dove.

"Can you tell me the weight of a snowflake?" asked the sparrow.

"Nothing more than nothing," replied the wild dove.

"In that case, I must tell you a marvelous story," the sparrow said.

"I was sitting on the branch of a fir tree, near the trunk, when it began to snow—not heavily—not a raging blizzard—no, just like a dream, gently, ever so softly. Since I did not have anything better to do, I counted the snowflakes settling on the twigs and needles of this branch. Their number reached exactly 3,741,952. When the 3,741,953rd snowflake dropped onto the branch, nothing more than nothing as you say, the branch broke off."

Having said that, the sparrow flew away.

The dove, who since the time of Noah's ark had been an authority on the matter, thought about the story for a while, and finally said to herself, "Perhaps there is only one person's voice lacking for the peace of Jesus to come to the world."

"Perhaps there is only one person's voice lacking for the peace of Jesus to come to transform the world." Let's close our eyes for a moment and meditate upon the peace of Jesus. (5 minute meditation).