
MAKING CONTACT WITH POTENTIAL MEMBERS

URANTIA Foundation keeps a database of readers who are interested in making contact with other readers. You may contact the office for information on your area.

Personal friends and acquaintances interested in the book usually fit easily within a study group. Referrals from other members of your group can work as well. A note of caution: if you are a single female hosting meetings in your home, you may want to meet referrals in a public place before inviting them into your home. We urge you to use all your powers of discretion and knowledge of safety matters in considering how you will handle such situations.

SETTING UP A TIME AND PLACE FOR MEETINGS

An essential ingredient for success appears to be a core group of readers who are committed to meeting at a routine time and place, thereby giving the group consistency and coherence. If meetings change place, day, or time frequently, you may see a drop in participation because members will find it difficult to remember and plan for the meeting. If consistency is not an option, a calendar of the meetings can be of help in keeping things on track. You should also set a time for beginning and ending your group.

PROVIDING COMFORTABLE SURROUNDINGS

Meetings are usually held in the host's home, but libraries or community centers sometimes provide meeting rooms for the public.

The meeting place should be comfortable with good lighting for reading. It's a good idea to have everyone seated so that they can see one another. A table can be helpful for writing notes and spreading out materials.

It is a good idea (but not essential) to have *The Urantia Book Concordance* (or a computer with the electronic version of *The Urantia Book* installed), a dictionary, a Bible, a Key Word Index, and a Pronunciation Guide available for reference purposes. It may also prove helpful to have additional copies of *The Urantia Book* for new comers who may not own one.

BALANCING STUDY AND SOCIALIZING

It is helpful to strike a balance between socializing and study in meetings. Except for celebrations, potluck dinners, and gatherings for purely social reasons, you may wish to guide how the group time is spent. Generally speaking, groups spend more time on study than socialization in regular meetings.

Some groups begin or end with a brief prayer or a moment of silence, but this should be a group decision. Some groups rotate bringing dessert for a social period following the meeting. Others have snacks available during the meeting.

We hope this information has been helpful and we wish you well in your study group. Please do not hesitate to call us if we may be of further assistance.

REFERENCES IN *THE URANTIA BOOK*

THAT MAY BE OF SOME HELP ARE:

The Decapolis Tour

Paper 159, p. 1762

Subjects:

Introduction for Teachers and Believers
Conflict Resolution
Forgiveness

Religion in Human Experience

Paper 100, p. 1094

Subjects:

Religious Growth
Problems of Growth
The Acme of Religious Living

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The Urantia Book

Suggestions
For Beginning
A Study Group

The early leaders of the Urantia movement were advised to form thousands of study groups. Perhaps this was because the study group environment is considered to be the most effective place for *The Urantia Book* teachings to take root in the hearts and minds of the participants while developing a social bonding of friendship among readers. Ideally, participation in study groups allows a natural growth of understanding to develop in a friendly, family style atmosphere.

Study group hosts embark on a journey that is filled with many rewards as well as some difficulties. Many study groups flounder while others thrive. Successful study group hosts have found that the basic keys to success are consistency, dedication, patience, understanding, love, and effort.

This brochure is designed to assist readers who are *Urantia Book* study group hosts or would like to become a study group host. It is a significant decision to make a commitment to lead a study group as you must be prepared to share these papers, that are so near and dear to your heart, with people you hardly know.

URANTIA Foundation does not have a set of guidelines for the formation or conduct of a study group. However, we can share what we have learned from fellow readers who have participated in various types of study groups. Over time, each group develops its own character and particular style of studying the book, one that best fits the collective needs of each of its members.

If you are interested in having your group listed in the Foundation's database so that it can be referred to new readers in your area, you may call the Foundation to request a study group referral form. For the Foundation to refer readers to your study group, we ask only that the groups be nonpolitical and focus their study only on *The URANTIA Book*.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEGINNING

YOUR STUDY GROUP

1. Establish a consistent day, time and location for the study group. It is important to decide on a dependable schedule so the members can easily reserve time for the meeting.
2. Provide a comfortable place to gather with good lighting. Coffee, tea and light refreshments add a friendly atmosphere.
3. Do not be easily discouraged: Groups ebb and flow as time goes by, but if a place to gather is consistently provided, people do respond. Although the Foundation can help by referring new readers to a group, many groups grow through word-of-mouth referrals in their area.

“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. Loving and intimate human associations tend to rob suffering of its sorrow and hardship of much of its bitterness. The presence of a friend enhances all beauty and exalts every goodness. 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.” [p. 1776, par. 2]

“A social group of human beings in co-ordinated working harmony stands for a force far greater than the simple sum of its parts.” [p. 1477, par. 1]

LEADERSHIP

“Effective and wise leadership. 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 co-operation—is dependent on leadership. The cultural civilizations of the past and the present have been based upon the intelligent co-operation 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” [p. 911, par. 2]

One does not need complete mastery of the book to lead a group. It is helpful for someone in the group to have read the entire book at least once. A leader does not need to be an expert on the book. The key is to be a good facilitator of the group process as they discover truth among themselves. No individual can know all the answers. Each person should be encouraged to share his or her opinions and experiences in the discovery process. Readers are often anxious to jump in and help with the discovery process, and this is what makes a good group. Every member should have the opportunity to speak and share opinions. A person who exerts too much control over the group can become a problem for others. Study of the book is a shared adventure, not a class lecture. Discovery in a study group setting is a team effort.

“The people heard him [Jesus] gladly because he was one of them, an unpretentious layman; the world’s greatest religious teacher was indeed a layman.” [p. 2090, par. 5]

Not having read the entire book should not discourage new readers who are starting a group, but lack an experienced leader. Many groups start with all new readers and thrive. Newer

readers may want to establish contact with other study groups to discuss difficult matters because it helps to explore as many viewpoints as possible when seeking the truth. There is no single or authorized view of the teachings.

Neither is there any single or authorized way to study the book. Most study groups read a paper during the meetings, stopping to discuss points of confusion or interest. Some groups read the papers consecutively; some choose a paper at random. Others study topics.

While it is certainly in our best interest to come together as a group to study and perform tasks, we must also be aware that there is no advantage to achieving consistent philosophical uniformity. It is diversity of viewpoint and experience that makes a study group so interesting and challenging. Study groups can facilitate growth and socialization, but they may also present new and surprising conflicts in interpretations of the message of the book. Members of the group are presented with new and unexpected growth opportunities as they learn together. Conflict is not necessarily negative. Resolving conflicts and turning them into higher meanings and values is a skill that can be gained through effort, patience, and kindness.

“New religious insights arise out of conflicts which initiate the choosing of new and better reaction habits in the place of older and inferior reaction patterns. New meanings only emerge amid conflict; and conflict persists only in the face of refusal to espouse the higher values connoted in superior meanings.” [p. 1097, par. 5]

There are many references in *The URANTIA Book* that can help with your task, and all members of your group can benefit from them. Some of these quotes are referenced at the end of this brochure.