Carpe Diem – Seize the Day – Progressive Evolution of Study Groups

By Joycee Patterson

Good morning and welcome to Day Two of the Study Group symposium! This morning we will focus on "HOW" to accomplish the Publication Mandate directives. We must NOT miss the moment which is before us.

*By a show of hands, how many present today have led or hosted a Study Group? (*Respond according to number of hands raised – such as: So, I see that virtually all of us present today have had the honor and responsibility of hosting a Study Group. OR, It looks like about 3/4s of all of us present today have hosted a Study Group. OR, I am a little surprised to see that only about 1/3rd of all of us present today have had the opportunity to host a Study Group.)

So, that leads to my next question – *How many present today have participated in more than one different Study Group? More than 5 different Study Groups? More than 10 different Study Groups?*

During the Breakout Sessions today we will individually be enriched by the vast experience we EACH bring to the table this week. Whether as Host or Participant or as a person with both experiences, we each will now profit by fully understanding the Publication Mandate and experiencing the joy of assisting in the actualization of its provisions.

After yesterday's presentations how many of us are now thinking there is far more to leading a study group than we first thought?

In 1974 I was introduced to TUB while in Sunday school at the Tampa, FL Unity Church. As we were comparing the Unity teachings on individuality and personality Steve Law opened a very large tome and shared what The Urantia Book had to say. This Sunday School class became my first Urantia Study Group – with each member a relative newcomer to the book. We chose to compare the teachings of TUB with the Unity School of Christianity teachings and metaphysical interpretations of Biblical events. So, even while we were based in a religious/spiritual setting, in this – my first Study Group - we were intellectually analyzing our beliefs about God, Jesus, Christianity, and our purpose in living. The emphasis was on intellectual understanding – important but NOT in full alignment with the Publication Mandate.

After yesterday's focus on the WHY of Study Groups*, how many of us are now ready to rethink the purpose and content of our study groups?* (Or, if needed – *Please raise a hand if you agree that now is the time to rethink the purpose and content of our study groups?*)

It is now time to focus on HOW to structure our Study Groups to best achieve the needed results to fulfill the Publication Mandate.

We must EACH return home invigorated with a complete understanding of the What, Why and HOW of the Mandate; bursting with creative strategies to begin the process of change; confident in our ability to teach our local study group members the truth, beauty and goodness of the Publication Mandate.

We must not just understand the need for change but KNOW HOW to re-organize, facilitate, and implement this new understanding.

We pray for guidance, we ask to know God's Will, and today we cannot deny that we are specifically TOLD of the WILL for us to use our study groups to accomplish the Mandate goals. *Are we ready for the challenge?*

Today let's determine what we need to do to put into practice what Gaetan and David talked about yesterday.

On Day 1 Gaetan convinced us once more the 'WHY' of hosting study groups.

Today, in Day 2, we will learn and practice "HOW" to host effective study groups which meet the criteria of the Publication Mandate.

This SG Symposium is about taking the next steps to more closely align our study groups with the ideals of the Mandate.

The revelators put much thought into the Publication Mandate so that we would more completely understand our need to host study groups which develop leaders and trainers of the Revelation.

Study Groups should be viewed as a safe place for members to share both understandings and misunderstandings of the teachings and to bring spirituality into the largely intellectual study group forum.

As study group leaders we now recognize the need to put more thought into the mission and goal of our study groups; the need to consider the actual role all study groups should play in participating in the mission of Michael and in our own Soul Growth.

Some specific Mandate advices: (in shortened form)

1. The Book belongs to the era immediately to follow the conclusion of the present ideological struggle. That will be the day when men will be willing to seek truth and righteousness…
   Seeking truth and righteousness is spiritual, not intellectual.
2. It will be more readily possible to formulate the cosmos of a new and improved era of human relationships. And it is for this better order of affairs on earth that the Book has been made ready.
   We must ACT to bring about a "better order of affairs on earth" – we must leave the intellectual realm of THINKING, ANALYZING, EVALUATING - and DO; we must FOLLOW the STEPS to change and improve the affairs on earth.

3. An early publication of the Book has been provided so that it may be in hand for the training of leaders and teachers.

   While training certainly requires intellectualization, all leaders and teachers must ACT, must be in tune with both the Publication Mandate and with the students of TUB – leaders must teach new students of TUB to ACT, to make CHANGES within their lives, to seek truth and righteousness, to be PART of the new and improved era of human relationships, and finally, these new students must understand that they too are being trained to be leaders and trainers of the teachings of TUB.

4. Its presence is also required to engage the attention of persons of means who may be thus led to provide funds for translations into other languages.

   So we might ask, should study groups provide a means for individuals who are not rich, to donate small amounts of money which the group collects and periodically donates as a lump sum for this purpose? Do we need a method for EACH person to be part of this glorious goal of providing the teachings of TUB to people around the world in their native tongues?

5. (You) who have dedicated (your) lives to the service of the Book and the Brotherhood can little realize the import of (your) doings. (You) will doubtless live and die without fully realizing that (you) are participating in the birth of a new age of religion on this world.

   Isn't this awesome?!! To be TOLD that we are PARTICIPATING in the birth of a NEW AGE of RELIGION on this world is a JOY and also a RESPONSIBILITY. To KNOW this, we MUST do our part!! Don't we WANT to get involved?!!?

   Don't we WANT to help our fellow Urantians to KNOW Jesus' teachings so that when He returns our brothers and sisters will NOT turn away from him or kill him again??

   So, HOW do we use our Study Groups to participate in the birth of this new age of religion on Urantia??

   And, does the word 'religion' bother some readers who have chosen not to part of any earthly religion and who profess to not BE religious?

6. (You) will do well to diligently study the order, plan, and methods of progression as they were enacted in the earth life of Michael when the Word was made flesh. You are becoming actors in an ensuing episode when the Word is made book. Great is the difference in these dispensations of religion, but many are the lessons which can be learned from a study of the former age.

   Clearly, we are meant to not just learn TUB teachings but to study the order, plan and methods of progression as unfolded in the earth life of Michael. We are meant to learn the lessons from this time of Jesus' life on earth.

7. (You) must again study the times of Jesus on earth…. Carefully take note of how the kingdom of heaven was inaugurated in the world. Evolve slowly or unfold naturally? Or, with a sudden show of force and with spectacular exhibition of power? Evolutionary or revolutionary?

   We must ask why it is important to study and KNOW how the kingdom of heaven came? What are the KEY learnings we must garner from our studies of TUB?

8. (You) must learn to possess (your) souls in patience. (You) are in association with a revelation of truth which is a part of the natural evolution of religion on this world. Overrapid growth would be suicidal.

   PATIENCE… we MUST learn to be patient in everything we do. Patience, born of understanding, brings peace to our lives AND shows others a model of behavior little known on our planet right now.

   This is confirmed and expanded by a Melchizedek on page 435 in TUB when he speaks about an order of local system seraphim:
   "These seraphim teach the fruitfulness of patience: That **stagnation** is certain death, but that overrapid growth is equally suicidal; " We must move forward and grow.

9. This book is being given to those who are ready for it long before the day of its worldwide mission. THOUSANDS OF STUDY GROUPS MUST BE BROUGHT INTO EXISTENCE AND THE BOOK MUST BE TRANSLATED INTO MANY TONGUES. Thus will the book be in readiness 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."

   We have study groups around the world – and now it is time to have MORE study groups and to focus the purpose of these study groups on the inspiring advices given in the Publication Mandate.

Let us now look at the 4 Parts of a study Group: Facilitator Skills, Goal Setting, Balancing the Spiritual and Intellectual, and honoring our Father within the Study Group forum.

(TUB, pg. 2082D – Religion does need new leaders, spiritual men and women who will dare to depend solely on Jesus and his incomparable teachings. If Christianity persists in neglecting its spiritual mission while it continues to busy itself with social and material problems, the spiritual renaissance must await the coming of these new teachers of Jesus' religion who will be exclusively devoted to the spiritual regeneration of men. And then will these spirit-born souls quickly supply the leadership and inspiration requisite for the social, moral, economic, and political reorganization of the world.

So while we may need to learn good or great Facilitator Skills, ***the pre-requisite is really a need for SPIRITUAL men and women who will dare to depend solely on Jesus and his incomparable teachings!***

WE must be the new teachers – a spiritual renaissance is waiting for us!

Facilitator Skills- We will examine facilitator skills more fully in our Breakout sessions with an emphasis on the importance of having and developing these facilitator skills in a study group setting. At the

beginning of this session I asked how many present today have ever led or hosted a Study Group. *Will you please raise your hands again?* It appears that most of us do have experience leading study groups.

> (TUB, pg. 786D) To discover leaders society must now turn to the conquests of peace: industry, science, and social achievement.
>
> (TUB, pg. 1958D-1959A) Jesus gives his final admonitions and warnings after his farewell discourse to the eleven. In my universe and in my Father's universe of universes, our brethren-sons are dealt with as individuals in all their spiritual relations, but in all group relationships we unfailingly provide for definite leadership. Our kingdom is a realm of order, and where two or more will creatures act in co-operation, there is always provided the authority of leadership.
>
> *So, hosts of Study Groups – do not abdicate leadership, we may designate leaders for different sessions but having a leader is key.*

"Please turn to your neighbor (or shoulder partner on left or right…) and share one facilitator skill you think is essential."

<u>Who will share the facilitator skills you discussed?</u> (Write them on paper??)

(TUB, pg. 1739B)" Leadership is dependent on natural ability, discretion, will power, and determination. Spiritual destiny is dependent on faith, love, and devotion to truth – hunger and thirst for righteousness – the wholehearted desire to find God and to be like him."

After members share - conclusion is made that facilitator skills are crucial to the success of all study groups and that group members will definitely recognize those facilitators who exhibit excellent leadership skills.

(Mention UAI Study Group Guide

What should our Goal(s) be?

Throughout TUB we read that all humans have the same Goals – whether we actively recognize that or not – (TUB pg. 1592A) – A common motive for life service; a desire to do God's will; and, a common goal of existence – to find the Father in heaven – thus proving to the universe that we each have become like Him.

Knowing we all have common goals can make it easier for a Leader. Expect and look for agreement as study group goals relate to knowing the Father.

With Goals we only have to think of what GOOD to bring to the hearts of our members, not what to take away from their experiences. (TUB, page 1592 C-D) Jesus said to Simon: "How many times have I instructed you to refrain from all efforts to take something OUT of the hearts of those who seek salvation? How often have I told you to labor only to put some living truths *into* these hungry souls?

Lead men into the kingdom and the great and living truths of the kingdom will presently drive out all serious error.

(TUB, page 1592D – 1593A) Jesus said in part: "When you enter the kingdom, you are reborn. You cannot teach the deep things of the spirit to those who have been born only of the flesh; first see that men are born of the spirit before you seek to instruct them in the advanced ways of the spirit. … Introduce men to God and *as* the sons of God before you discourse on the doctrines of the fatherhood of God and the sonship of men. Do not strive with men – always be patient. It is not your kingdom; you are only ambassadors. Simply go forth proclaiming: This is the kingdom of heaven – God is your Father and you are his sons, and this good news, if you wholeheartedly believe it, *is* your eternal salvation."

We might say that Jesus had a goal for his disciples… (TUB page 1593C) "Jesus…desired his disciples, having tasted of the good spirit realities of the kingdom, so to live in the world that men, by *seeing* their lives, would become kingdom conscious and hence be led to inquire of believers concerning the ways of the kingdom."

(TUB, pg. 1593 C-D) If we are to be leaders and trainers/teachers of the truth then we must know that "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."

2. Goal Setting- Goal Setting- can be a new and innovative technique of inspiring the study group to move beyond the standard study group model.

Now that we recognize the need to CHANGE our study groups to focus on the leadership and training of readers, we need to ask ourselves HOW to accomplish this?

How quickly do we need or want to progress? Is it wise to jump quickly into a radical departure from our study group norms? Or, is it better to go slowly with a series of short-term goals which are designed to slowly lead us into a fuller understanding of the Publication Mandate, and also slowly develop leaders and trainers among our members?

Where do we want to be? Will our study group members need to be 'sold' on the idea of a new format and/or process for our regular study group? Is a short term goal the best starting point in this quest to re-focus our study groups?

These are questions you will focus on in a portion of today's Breakout Workshop. ☺

We will also introduce SMART Goals – which set the prerequisites for goal writing.

- SMART goals – an acronym for
    - Strategic;
    - Measurable;
    - Attainable;
    - Realistic; and,
    - Time specific

(TUB, pg. 911 C-D) *No great social or economic change should be attempted suddenly.* Time is essential to all types of human adjustments – physical, social, or economic. Only moral and spiritual adjustments can be made on the spur of the moment, and even these require the passing of time for the full outworking of their material and social repercussions.

In our Breakout Sessions we will consider setting small goals; goals which might be developed and worked on by members from our home study groups. Or, some of you may prefer to set the 'final goal' – based upon the Publication Mandate – and then create a series of small goals which will lead up to the accomplishment of our most important and final goal. Ask audience: "How many of you want to be slow at achieving your goal?" (a little humor…)

3. Balance of Spiritual & Intellectual- By virtue of being in a study group we've been studying The Urantia Book on a very intellectual level, while a balance of Spiritual & Intellectual is almost certainly what the writers of TUB would prefer. This intellectual approach of reading and discussing probably dominates most of our study group experiences. It's time to rethink this format!

(TUB pg. 1616C-D) Prayer is designed to make man less thinking but more *realizing*; it is not designed to increase knowledge but rather to expand insight.

Worship is intended to anticipate the better life ahead and then to reflect these new spiritual significances back onto the life which now is. Prayer is spiritually sustaining, but worship is divinely creative.

Worship is the technique of looking to the *One* for the inspiration of service to the *many.* Worship is the yardstick which measures the extent of the soul's detachment from the material universe and its simultaneous and secure attachment to the spiritual realities of all creation.

Prayer is self-reminding – sublime thinking; worship is self-forgetting – superthinking. Worship is effortless attention, true and ideal soul rest, a form of restful spiritual exertion.

Worship is the act of a part identifying itself with the Whole; the finite with the Infinite; the son with the Father; time in the act of striking step with eternity. Worship is the act of the son's personal communion with the divine Father, the assumption of refreshing, creative, fraternal, and romantic attitudes by the human soul-spirit."

Perhaps the reason most Christian churches have doxologies, statements of faith, standardized prayers, and weekly re-statements of church beliefs is to KEEP the congregation tuned into the REASON for attending church; the focus our lives should follow; and, the expectations of God for us to serve and love our brothers as we would have God love us?

Without becoming indoctrinated… a talking point for the Breakout Sessions today is the question of MISSION. Should the members of a Study Group work together to remind each other of the teachings of TUB as the teachings relate to the Publication Mandate and THEN create a Mission Statement which succinctly states the beliefs and goals of their group? Should that Mission Statement be reiterated before each meeting?

How do we incorporate a spiritual dimension into our group study? Jesus brought the spiritual perspective into every opportunity that was presented.

Quote:

4. Introduce the Opportunity to Honor the Father into the Study Group-

During the Breakout Session you will have an opportunity to discuss and try out several ways to Honor our Father.

By a show of hands how many of you incorporate some form of prayer, silence, or music, for instance, into your study group sessions?

By using any of these methods we are helping initiate that man-God connection that is so much needed to honor our Father. We must have the willingness and desire.

"The Universal Father never imposes any form of arbitrary recognition, formal worship, or slavish service upon the intelligent will creatures of the universes. The evolutionary inhabitants of the worlds of time and space must of themselves — in their own hearts — recognize, love, and voluntarily worship him. The Creator refuses to coerce or compel the submission of the spiritual free wills of his material creatures. The affectionate dedication of the human will to the doing of the Father's will is man's ***choicest gift*** *to God; in fact, such a consecration of creature will constitutes man's only possible gift of true value to the Paradise Father."* [pg 22]

We honor God by doing His will.

Jesus told his apostles:

"Never forget there is only one adventure which is more satisfying and thrilling than the attempt to discover the will of the living God, and that is the supreme experience of honestly trying to do that divine will. [pg 1732]

Lets be about our Fathers business!

Thank You

Joycee Patterson