

Urantia Foundation Leadership Roundtable April 25, 2026

Growing Study Groups to 1000 by 2040

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Agenda

- Why focus on study groups?
- What do study groups mean to people & what purpose do study groups serve?
- Types of study groups, best practices, lessons learned
- How to grow a study group?
- Weaving revelation
- Spiritual Living Support Groups (SLSGs)
- High level topical discussions for Jesus Celebrations & the value of topical discussions
- Q&A

Why focus on study groups?

- *Thousands of study groups must be brought into existence and the book must be translated into many tongues.*
- Current study group directory includes 550 study groups [https://
www.urantiastudygroup.org/](https://www.urantiastudygroup.org/)

Why are we focused on study groups?

Spirit is the basic personal reality in the universes, and personality is basic to all progressing experience with spiritual reality. . . .

Love is the secret of beneficial association between personalities.

. . . . the sum of two or more things is very often something *more* than, or something *different* from, the predictable additive consequences of such unions.

12:9.1-3 (141.2-4)



What do study groups mean to people?

- A spiritual home
- An opportunity to meet people & cultivate new friendships
- An approach to God

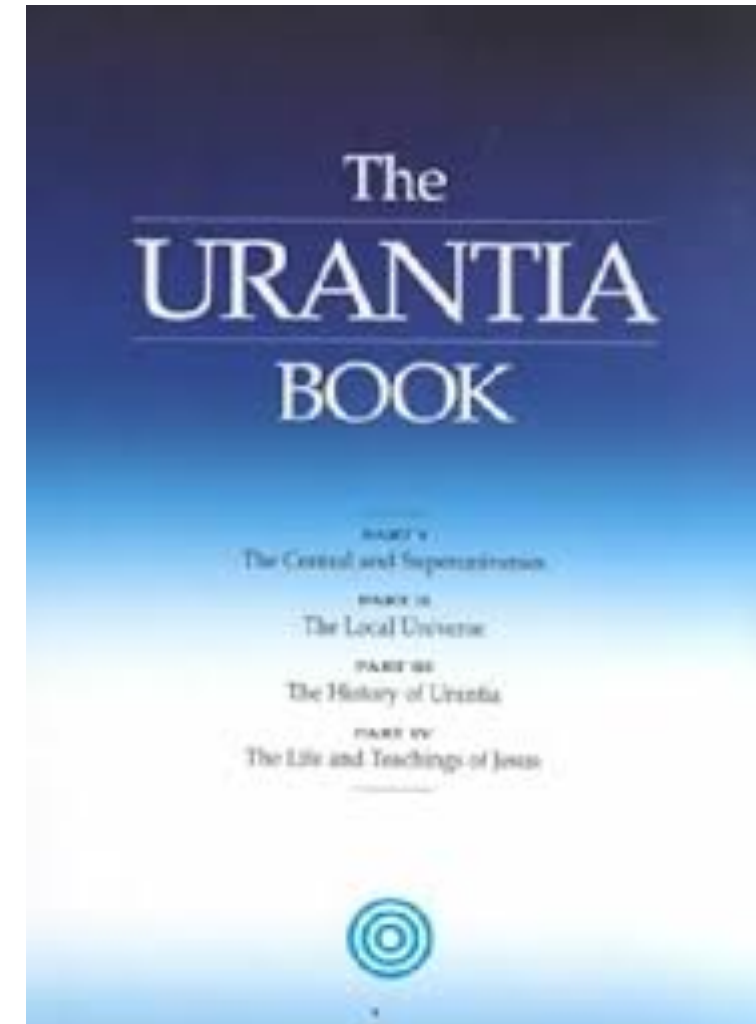


What purpose do study groups serve?

- Study the book & grow our understanding of its teachings
- Hear other attendees perspectives
- Foster relationships & friendships
- Apply the lessons of the book to our daily lives
- Serve as a clearing house for information on conferences, projects & service opportunities

But none of these things can happen if people don't attend a study group. If study groups aren't run well, people don't attend. The smooth functioning of study groups is critical to their success & growth.

Study group facilitator training would improve the quality of study groups.



Types of study groups

- Virtual
- In person
- Hybrid (includes in person & virtual participants)
- Social media study groups (e.g., Facebook, WhatsApp)



How many of you attend more study groups today than you did before COVID (in January 2020)?

Best practices (to ensure people return)

- Focus on the book
- Strong facilitator or facilitator team with backup for timing conflicts
- Introduce new attendees with a quick round of introductions
- Engage all attendees: invite but don't force participation
- Start on time, end on time
- Maintain a consistent schedule with defined timing (e.g., 28 minutes of sharing, 2 minutes for prayer, 88 minutes for study/discussion, 2 minutes for wrap-up)

Best practices (to ensure people return)

- If virtual, raise hands to comment & wait until called upon (facilitator should also look out for technology-challenged folks & allow them an opportunity to participate)
- If virtual, ensure group has access to backup link in case of scheduling conflicts
- Confirm next session at end of study group (noting changes in facilitator, link, location, timing) & send email reminder
- Highlight upcoming events, such as Spotlight presentations

For more information including tutorials, see the Study Group Guide and the directory at <https://www.urantiastudygroup.org/>

Lessons learned

- Know how & when to move discussion along, re-focus on the book (e.g., would everyone like to move on to the next section?)
- Avoid partisan political discussions
- For virtual study groups, ensure facilitator knows how to mute or remove attendees (e.g., if someone is in a noisy location or is disruptive)
- If channeling comes up in a way that requires comment (e.g., re-focusing didn't work), the facilitator can refer to 112:3.7 (mortals on the mansion worlds are not permitted to send messages to their loved ones) and 100:5 (don't misunderstand thoughts/dreams as divine guidance).

Types of formats (there is no wrong format)

- Sequential reading of entire book
- Sequential reading with occasional topical discussions
- Sequential reading of Part IV
- Topical discussions



Sequential reading is the easiest format & requires the least preparation. Variety helps ensure attendee needs & tastes are met.

How to grow a study group?

- Invite people to join a session (rather than asking them to read a 2000-page book)
- Invite members or guests to present a project or paper
- Discuss study groups & refer to study group directory when contextually appropriate (e.g., when participating in a UBIS course or speaking with attendees at a conference)
- Solicit input on ideas for special presentations or discussion topics so study group members feel ownership
- Consider incorporating online study aids—e.g., relevant videos, maps or visualizations

Weaving revelation

Gaetan Charland

Spiritual Living Support Groups (SLSGs)

Marvin Gawryn

Jesus Celebrations



High level topical discussions for Jesus Celebrations

Begin planning about 2-3 months in advance. Propose topics & obtain agreement. Provide expected time limits. Send follow up emails & reminders. Stick to the schedule. For example, to cover 9 sections in 90 minutes of discussion, limit each to 9-1/2 minutes. Slides are allowed but not required. Note: These topics were presented in 90 minutes.

- Paper 119, The Bestowals of Christ Michael—each section is presented by a team of 2-3 through study questions. Everyone is expected to have read the entire paper in advance so presenters can focus on their questions. Time is spent on discussion, not reading.

High level topical discussions for Jesus Celebrations

- Parables of Jesus—select a parable and explain what it means or why it’s helpful. Even if people choose the same parable, their focus differs enough that there is no real duplication.
- Teaching methods (other than parables)—present an example of Jesus’ teaching methods and discuss how we can put these to use in our daily lives—focus on a specific paper, such as *On the Way to Rome*, *The Sojourn at Rome*, the Urmia lectures or all of Part IV.
- Paper 140, *The Ordination of the Twelve*—can be done individually or in pairs—present each of the italicized “Beatitudes” from sections 4 and 5.

Topical discussions (cont.)

- Paper 21, The Paradise Creator Sons—teams of 2-3 present each section with discussion questions. Everyone is expected to have read the entire paper so the discussion is focused on prepared questions.
- Paper 144:2-4, starting with The Discourse on Prayer, have teams of 4-5 present each of the sections with prepared study questions.
- Paper 196:0.10, The Faith of Jesus, “Jesus never prayed as a religious duty. To him prayer was” Proceed through the list, discussing insights from each description. How might this impact our prayer practices?

Value of topical discussions

- Require synthesis of ideas & preparation
- Foster collaboration among study group members
- Allow for broader analysis than sequential reading
- Encourage ownership

But the downside is the substantial advance preparation which may deter some attendees.

What have we learned about study groups?

- Inviting people to attend study groups is one way to increase attendance
- Facilitation is critical to quality
- Facilitation training can increase quality & improve retention
- Variety is necessary to meet the needs of God's unique children
- There is a growing recognition of the importance of the spiritual side of study groups

Q&A