

A PLEA FOR MORE SMALL STUDY GROUPS

Dear Friends:

I want to express a concern and some possible solutions for your consideration and reply. I realize that any discussion should be the composite thinking of many dedicated people and should be expressed to headquarters in Chicago.

In early days we were advised to form thousands of study groups and further, to avoid publicity. In this way people from all walks of life would become knowledgeable about the Book and ready to defend it from any possible attack from unenlightened individuals. Most of all, study groups individuals' lives would be upstepped and thus able to, in their various walks of life, be able to grow wisely and upstep lives of others.

Again: THOUSANDS of study groups before any publicity.

My concern is that of keeping a balance between the modest small study group's growth and the ever-growing big conferences. I love the joy, fellowships and presentations at these conferences and I have always been right in there working for them. However, now I am beginning to foresee some real dangers in the emphasis and fast growth of big conferences. They appear to be growing at a far faster rate than the smaller in-the-home, grass-roots study groups. For example, we could easily anticipate a thousand people attending a national conference in the next two or three years. On the other hand, at the moment we cannot count more than a hundred study groups in the whole world out of more than 55,000 books which have been sold. This is obviously an out-of-balance situation. The emphasis should be on small study groups.

Let's examine some possible hypothetical results of this out-of-balance situation and then set a course to try to correct it. Say that a thousand should attend one national conference. Our first reaction is "GREAT". However, let's think this through. 1,000 come with very little background and study group experience. There always exists a natural, emotional gust of enthusiasm which we all share. A crowd that large and enthusiastic is newsworthy. I have been married to a newspaper man for 25 years and I know that size crowd will attract reporters. They know nothing about the Book. They can only glean a few notes here and there and possibly from people who have had no deep training and interaction with others at home in small study groups. The reporter will also attend some in-between meetings at hotels, dormitories, restaurants where---you can supply the rest of the possibilities. How will all this come out in his hastily written articles for newspapers or magazines? You can just surmise (and pretty accurately) that it will do a great disservice to our newly organizing movement--yet in its infancy stage.

Great credit goes to our leaders in the Foundation and Brotherhood who have so far so successfully kept this quiet through 20 years. It is amazing and worthy that they have done so, and we must continue their good work.

Let's work toward the goal of thousands of study groups. My own stated goal is to be able to report at least 100 study groups from the west at the Triennial Conference in June 1976 in Chicago. We cannot force study groups but we can help organize the existing enthusiastic individuals into small study groups thus attracting other readers and students and we can improve and upstep present small groups with sparks of new ideas and helps for improved study.

We would deeply appreciate your reactions and helps. We are all working for the Father and in the same loving family.

Love-peace-joy.

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