

To: All participants in the summer workshop sessions, 1975

Subject: The nature of the proposed Brotherhood School

Let us realize that in our efforts to spiritually uplift the planet, no matter how idealistically beautiful our intentions, their actualization will have to come about at the point where they interface with realities already present in the planetary environment. It is therefore essential that we maintain an awareness of the directions and trends of social evolution on the planet.

I'm sure that you would all agree that we are living in an age of tumultuous social change. If we can agree that the rate of that change is a direct function of the rapid spread and communication of information, which in turn is a direct repercussion of rapid population growth, we can easily see that for the immediate future, at least the next several lifetimes, we will not have a planetary environment conducive to the smooth functioning of stabilized institutions; rather will we find ourselves in a stormy psycho-social sea wherein the institutions of society will be exerting a great deal of effort just to survive, making a frantic series of adjustments in a vain attempt to reach some degree of equilibrium. To emphasize this point I should mention that the growth of computer usage is projected at being greater during the next five years than in the previous twenty, demanding an adjustment of gigantic proportions on the part of our entire social order.

In this context I would plead for keeping the structures of the movement as minimal as possible. If needed, we should develop clean, efficient systems that meet specific needs as they emerge, and that dissolve when those needs no longer exist. It is my belief that the task of designing relatively permanent and sophisticated systems belongs to the students of a future generation. It is our responsibility to nurture seedlings thru a harsh spring, to build a base of dedicated students of this revelation, committed followers of the Father's will, from which will emerge the future forms of the movement.

Given the above, I think that the challenge confronting us is to keep from setting up structures which will get in our way as the social matrix changes, that impede the effectiveness of our responses in an age of rapidly changing needs. The simpler our structures, the less exposure and wear they will have to withstand from erosion during the social rip tides and storms of coming decades. A low-profile, scattered organization is virtually impervious to attack as long as channels of communication remain open, whereas a central structure can be focused upon by destructive forces and brought under great pressure, to say nothing of the political and economic problems inherent in the administration of a large system.

I feel that any central agency should do little more than facilitate the functioning of local structures, by serving as a clearinghouse for information access and intergroup communication coordination. Let's be about the business of setting up a lot of healthy study groups and consider a more sophisticated educational system only if and when local resources are exhausted. I think that the local study groups have tremendous unrealized potentials for educational service to themselves and each other; let's see some of it emerge before we block it with grandiose attempts at global conquest.

Because of this viewpoint, my information on "methods" will be geared towards study groups; I hope that you will find it relevant to yours.

Fraternally,

David Kenton

METHODS:
THE PARTICIPATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE STUDY GROUP

Enjoyment of study is thru satisfaction which can be derived thru:

Being silent * Being accepted * Expressing yourself *
Being appreciated * Being prepared * Setting goals *
Expressing enthusiasm * Attaining goals * Thinking * Giving *
Taking * Helping achieve oneness * Experiencing variety *
Practicing adaptability * Ministering * Studying * Making progress *

Prepare for participation and contribution by praying for enlightenment as you study on your own.

Practical participation:

DESIRABLE ACTIVITY

Pray for the meeting

Listen to others

Build morale

Contribute your own ideas

Share your own experiences

Reinforce others

Think

Inquire

Help maintain the quality
and orientation of the group
the quality and orientation
of your contributions

Analyze

CARRIED TO AN EXTREME

Become pious and ostentatious

Become nonresponsive

Become "goody-goody"

Dominate discussion

Start an encounter group

Become a "Sir Galahad"

Become an intellectual snob

Ask too many shallow questions

Become "holier-than-thou"

Substitute dry intellectualization
for motivating truth

Watch out for:

MISFIRING: Popping off with irrelevant comments which are the result of your own internal free association with something brought up in the meeting.

Responding to a point which already has been passed by.

Being unclear in your response; don't let your mind wander as you're responding and carry you far from the topic.

Failing to think thru your response before verbalizing it.

Making overly frequent references to pet socio/political ideas.

DECLINING TO PARTICIPATE:

Tired; watch your health needs

Impatient with procedure or bored with topic; can lead to wisecracks or thinly veiled hostile remarks which disrupt the class for others.

Avoid overdoing your participation; allow space for those to speak who may be less aggressive.

The activities which occur in your study group should form an organic part of the efforts of our unseen benefactors to spiritualize humanity.

"The Study Group" must be seen only as a means to the end that individuals advance in their inner spiritual lives.

METHODS:
POINTS TO CONSIDER IN OPERATING AN EFFICIENT STUDY GROUP

- 1) Provide adequate lighting and ventilation, particularly if there are smokers in the group.
- 2) Side-step controversial matters and arguments; knowing about God is not as important as is getting to know him thru experience.
- 3) Sit in a circle facing each other rather than in rows.
- 4) A fellowship must exist where committed people can be honest with each other and discover the dimension of apostolic fellowship, that is fellowship between creatures of diverse background whose only common element may be a dedication to the pursuit of the Father's will.
- 5) Commitment, in order to be effective, must needs keep company with honesty.
- 6) Interdependence within a group is a healthy state if it avoids the extremes of stubborn independence and childish dependence.
- 7) Developing groups occasionally reach a plateau which is difficult to abandon for a higher level. This barrier to growth often is only overcome by crisis, internal or external, if it is not wisely planned for and transcended when it appears.

Internal crisis: Individual suddenly expresses concern for group and brings the condition to the attention of all, calling for change.
Intra-group conflict

External Crisis: Competition from another group
Attack "
Accusation "

A crisis may or may not lead to renewal; the ultimate effect of any crisis will depend on the ability of the group leaders to utilize the lever of crisis for positive change.

- 8) Be aware of the differences between "teaching" a group and "leading" a group.

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR ENHANCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR GROUP

- . Rotate leadership.
- . Encourage people from varied backgrounds to study together.
- . Stick to the topic; avoid tangents which may become an exchange of mutual ignorance.
- . Encourage all to participate but don't force anyone to.
- . Try rotating the location.
- . A light snack or beverage (tea anyone?) is nice to have during the meeting.
- . Time is valuable; don't waste it.
- . The availability of a concordance and a good dictionary is helpful.
- . Promptness is a courtesy; begin and close at the agreed upon time.
- . Establish a policy about the presence of children; they can be extremely distracting to some groups or a valuable addition to others, but bear in mind that your beautiful child may be a serious imposition on the others who may have come for serious study.
- . Stick to The Urantia Book as a source of information; use of other literature can greatly distract from the central purpose of studying The Urantia Book.
- . If you are leading, don't talk too much; encourage discussion rather than a question/answer session.
- . The leader must constantly make value judgements about the relative value of different lines of thought which develop, and must direct the course of the discussion to completion within the allotted time.
- . If you wish to emphasize a specific point, mention it at the beginning, refer to it during, and summarize it at the end of the meeting.
- . Meet your time limits by dividing the material into sub-sections and setting time limits for them; while you want to be flexible during the meeting, this may help you get thru all of your material.
- . Pray for guidance as you prepare and present.

METHODS:
FOSTERING UNITY

SOME NOTES ON GROUPS GLEANED FROM CONTEMPORARY WRITINGS ON THE TOPIC

Some factors influencing the unity of groups

- 1) Dependency (of individuals upon group for the meeting of psycho-social needs)
- 2) Size Interaction among group members is inversely proportional to the size of the group.
- 3) Quality and quantity of member interaction; depth of communication.
- 4) Stability of membership.
- 5) Isolation from other groups having similar goals.
- 6) Absence or presence of outside pressure on the group.
- 7) Commitment of individuals to the goals of the group.

Disruptive to unity

- 1) Members attempt to use different means, on their own, to attain the goals of the group.
- 2) Differences of opinion as to priority of goal order.
- 3) Conflicts between the goals of individuals and the goals of the group.

Psycho-social repercussions of groups

- 1) The stability and unity of the group is proportional to the attachment of the members to the group; thus does a strong group become influential is setting behavior norms.
- 2) In a strong group, deviant members are more likely to pattern their behavior after that of model members whereas in an unhealthy group, the pattern may reverse, leading to group disintegration.
- 3) In strong groups, individuals seldom tend to hold out against otherwise unanimous group judgements.
- 4) Groups influence member behavior thru: support, reinforcement, security, encouragement, ridicule, dislike, shame, and threat of expulsion.

Specific measures to promote unity of a group

- 1) Emphasize value of total organizational effectiveness and the role of sub-groups in contributing to it. The use of competition to stimulate development can easily lead to the emergence of intergroup conflict and a breakdown of co-operation.
- 2) Measure and reward sub-groups on the basis of their contribution to the whole rather than building local pride by recognizing only individual effectiveness.
- 3) Foster a high level of interaction and communication between groups aimed at intergroup coordination and help. The setting of common goals and fostering of valid communication relevant to their attainment will help prevent the build-up of intergroup tensions.
- 4) Recognize and reward help that groups give to each other.
- 5) Foster a type of intergroup communication which will facilitate development of a high degree of mutual understanding and empathy for the problems of one another.
- 6) Avoid win/lose situations by never putting groups into the position of competing for the same organizational awards. Emphasis should be placed on pooling of resources to maximize organizational effectiveness and sharing of rewards equally.

NOTE: It is important to recognize that the absence of disagreement is not necessarily desirable; conflict and disagreement are essential to the achievement of the best solution to a problem. What is harmful is interpersonal or intergroup conflict in which the task is not as important as is gaining advantage over the other person or group.

METHODS:

POSSIBLE FORMATS FOR STRUCTURING STUDY GROUPS

(Please note that these formats provide for some degree of group participation. I feel that the most effective group is the one that has all of it's members participating conjointly in the teaching and learning processes. The term "forum" will indicate group discussion.)

- 1) LECTURE/FORUM Presentation of a formal lecture followed by a group discussion of the material covered. Meeting can be broken up into a series of short lectures each followed by a brief period of discussion.
- 2) TEAM TEACHING/FORUM Two or more speakers followed by a discussion, or speakers-discussion leader-discussion sequence.
- 3) INFORMAL DISCUSSION The loosest of all formats; free, open discussion of a topic of interest; may be done by the group as a whole, or it may done by a lot of sub-groups.
- 4) FORMAL DISCUSSION A little more order than in the informal discussion; a leader poses questions for which specific answers are sought in the ensuing discussion.
- 5) COLLOQUY The group breaks up into small groups which develop specific questions related to a given topic. A leader from each group then becomes a part of a panel which poses the questions to another panel of resource persons. The resource persons may be members who have done extensive study on the topic, or outsiders representing a particular field or discipline. An open discussion may follow.
- 6) ASSIGNMENT/REPORT/FORUM Formal reports are delivered to the group on previously assigned topics followed by discussion. Individuals or teams may be assigned the topics for reports.
- 7) CLASSROOM RESEARCH/FORUM This could also be considered looking for um; the leader poses topics for research during the study period followed by a discussion of the findings at the conclusion of the session.
- 8) CASE STUDY/FORUM Examination of an incident and drawing of ideas from it relevant to present situations.
- 9) SMALL GROUP RESEARCH/FORUM Main topic broken up into sub-topics for research (groups of 4-5) then a forum is held consisting of group reports and discussion of findings.
- 10) DRAMA/FORUM A dramatic presentation is given followed by discussion of points and issues raised.
- 11) CLASS INTERVIEW/FORUM A resource person answers questions fielded by the class. Questions may be submitted beforehand for study by the resource person.
- 12) DEBATE/FORUM Opposing views assigned for research and debate presentation followed by discussion.
- 13) PAPER REVIEW/FORUM A paper (or section) of the book is reviewed book review style followed by discussion.
- 14) AUDIO VISUAL/FORUM An audio visual presentation is followed by a group discussion, possibly with the producers of the presentation acting as discussion leaders.
- 15) CIRCULAR RESPONSE Comments on a presented idea are given in turn, around the group. A good way to encourage participation on the part of those who may be a little shy.
- 16) REFLECTION RESPONSE/FORUM Silent reading and meditation upon an assigned portion followed by discussion.

- 17) WRITTEN WORK/FORUM With the proper application of imagination, this format could be a lot of fun. Written work could include: Written answers to written questions, matching, multiple choice, completion, crossword puzzles, short essays, paraphrase. Written work could be assigned in advance, leading to a discussion during the actual study period. Work can be turned in and redistributed for discussion.
- 18) GAMES AND SIMULATIONS Simulations are working models of reality containing the most important parts of the reality situation. Any past, present, or future situation in which humans working in a society find themselves making decisions and taking action to change the course of events around them can be the subject of a simulation game. Play to be followed by evaluation and discussion of discoveries.

Types of Games

- 1) Media ascendant simulation: Techniques that emphasize learning thru vicarious experience usually mediated by machines, computers, films, pictures, etc.
- 2) Interpersonal ascendant simulation: Techniques that are characterized by decision making, role playing, and player interaction.
- 3) Non-simulation games: Techniques that feature a competitive context for learning concepts and principles drawn from formal disciplines (sometimes referred to as "motivational games").

It should be pointed out the the design and operation of simulation games is a relatively sophisticated and complex undertaking. There is quite a bit of information relevant to it at your local university library in the education section.

Teachers should learn the art of asking carefully phrased questions which will help the student perceive specific meanings, understanding, (association with other meanings), and possible decisions for action of a value-associative nature.

Be sure that you understand the objective situation to which you are relating and avoid relating only to your subjective conception of what that situation is; you will thus greatly increase your effectiveness.

A system designed to serve people must be structured so that it's output is information needed by those served. Maximum efficiency of system occurs when information at output precisely matches information need by system served, minimizing impedance mismatch, which occurs when serving system is unable to provide information required by system served. Significant impedance mismatch will introduce distortion into both systems and may eventually lead to their collapse.

Look at language as a transportation system for ideas; it must be fast, direct, clear, and comfortable. Therefore let us eschew all obfuscation.

A bibliography will accompany the final report of my committee on "methods".

David Kentor