

THE COMMISSION TO MINISTER  
The Way Jesus Taught Us to Relate to the Father

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I can think of no better way of learning how to relate to the Father than through the guidelines given to us by Jesus and our own personal experience. Jesus demonstrates and teaches us to seek a first hand, personal relationship with our Heavenly Father.

Both Jesus and the authors of The URANTIA Book point out that anyone who has experienced a dynamic personal relationship with God and has dedicated himself to the demands of this relationship must do something about it. Genuine religion always motivates action and changes lives. Many of us have received just enough of an inoculation of religion to have developed an immunity to the real thing. We can comfortably intellectualize and emot about it endlessly and thereby escape the fruit-bearing demands of action. Neither high sounding words, grandiose plans, nor good intentions are substitutes for service, for actually doing the Father's will.

Jesus constantly emphasizes the centrality of service and fruit-bearing in our relationship with the Father. Religionists have often side-stepped the demanding discipline of spiritual ministry by engaging in religious substitutes such as theologizing, cult cultivation, rule-making, legalism, dogmatic proclamation, and mystic contemplation. The basic teachings of Jesus can be summarized by three words: attitude, action, and outreach. We are to love God with all of our heart, soul, and mind and our neighbor as ourself. We actualize this love in the concrete action of creative service; and this ministry is to be directed in an outreach to the ends of the earth.

Let us recall in more detail what Jesus has to say about this life of ministering to our fellows. In the parable of the Sower he illustrates the importance of sowing the seed of truth. This seed will obviously fall on different types of ground. The sowing is our responsibility; but the results, to a large extent, are in greater hands. We are reminded on p. 557 of The URANTIA Book, "The evolving soul is not made divine by what it does, but by what it strives to do." We ought to strive to what the appetites of our associates for truth (556) but not be overly concerned about results.

The parable of the Two Sons points out that good intentions are not enough; actually doing the Father's will is required of all true sons and daughters. Or as Matthew phrases it, "Not everyone that saith unto me 'Lord, Lord' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 7:22) To Peter he said, "Feed my sheep." (p. 2048)

The parables of the Good Samaritan, the Lost Sheep, and the Lost Coin all emphasize the importance of reaching out to others. Cults tend to be centripetal, inward; their primary relationships and focus is with insiders. Knowledge is shared only with cult members and special guidance is usually claimed by the select few. A mature religion or religionist is open and outgoing and seeks to bring ministry to all mankind. When we turn from our in-group preoccupations, we see that, indeed, the fields are white for the harvest but the laborers are few. The world hungers for a vision of a larger understanding of the universe and God.



Jesus admonishes us that one of the vital ways in which we relate with the Father is through the talents and treasure given to us. On page 1917-18 we read, "Truth is living; the Spirit of Truth is ever leading the children of light into new realms of spiritual reality and divine service. You are not given truth to crystallize into settled, safe, and honored forms. Your revelation of truth must be so enhanced by passing through your personal experience that new beauty and actual spiritual gains will be disclosed to all who behold your spiritual fruits and in consequence thereof are led to glorify the Father who is in heaven. Only those faithful servants who thus grow in the knowledge of truth, and who thereby develop the capacity for divine appreciation of spiritual realities, can ever hope to 'enter fully into the joy of their Lord.' What a sorry sight for successive generations of the professed followers of Jesus to say regarding their stewardship of divine truth: 'Here, Master, is the truth you committed to us a hundred or a thousand years ago. We have lost nothing; we have faithfully preserved all you gave us; we have allowed no changes to be made in that which you taught us; here is the truth you gave us.' But such a plea concerning spiritual indolence will not justify the barren steward of truth in the presence of the Master. In accordance with the truth committed to your hands will the Master of truth require reckoning."

These ringing words of the authors of The URANTIA Book are a clarion call to action. We further read on page 1780, "If you are not a positive and missionary evangel of your religion, you are self-deceived in that what you call religion is only a traditional belief or a mere system of intellectual philosophy." We are told on page 279-80, "In the universal regime you are not reckoned as having possessed yourself of knowledge and truth until you have demonstrated your ability and your willingness to impart this knowledge and truth to others."

The latest and greatest truth which the Master has committed into our hands is the fifth epochal revelation. What fruits of the spirit show that you have done something creative with this enlarged vision of truth in your life and in your service? Where have you sown this new seed of truth? Are you cultivating soil and planting seeds with care; or are you merely letting nature take its course and busying yourself with other things while the winds broadcast the seed at random? Are you content to admire this beautiful treasure of wisdom, drinking in its great truths, and circumspectly sharing them with a few initiates of your in-group and then returning the treasure again to its closet? Or are you putting this treasure to work in the world where it can enrich all of the peoples of the earth?

A mere handful of apostles and disciples of the fourth epochal revelation turned the Roman world up-side-down. Although thousands of people are students of The URANTIA Book most of them are "closet" followers of the fifth epochal revelation. After twenty-five years of preparing for the time when we will have an outreach program, the world, generally, is oblivious to its existence. I think the time has come to initiate a wise, but open, outreach ministry to the world.

I would remind you that virtually all of the major spiritual advances of history were spearheaded by laymen. The religious professionals not only are the stewards of vested interests, but their spiritual vision has been shaped and circumscribed by institutional forms and theological structures. It is perfectly natural for the priests living in Jerusalem to doubt that anything of real value could originate in Nazareth. This places an extraordinary responsibility in the hands of laymen for the initiation of any epochal spiritual renaissance.



It is easy for new spiritual movements to be captured by cult dynamics. They tend to become preoccupied with in-group activities and functions, organizational developments, legalistic disputes, and internal power struggles in the place of the proclamation of truth and spiritual ministry. The only escape from this cultocentric trap is to relate to the Father as Jesus taught his apostles: by engaging in an active, outgoing proclamation of the good news; we can transcend the cultocentric predicament through a courageous attempt to share these great truths with all mankind. I would invite all serious students of The URANTIA Book to dedicate themselves to some form of active outreach ministry.

This service to our fellowmen can take many forms and each of us must discover which function or channel we find creative. We can serve the Father in every vocation of man and through all of the arts and the sciences. Jesus directs us to seek the Father's guidance and direction for our lives. All of us are not called to the same ministry. Courageously keep step with the music you hear. Whether it be the call of the trumpets, the cadence of the drums, the melody of the woodwinds, the exquisite strains of the violins, or the quieting harmony of the harp - follow your own inner leading and so will the Father's symphony of service benefit all mankind.

There are three basic forms of service in which we are challenged to participate. First, we should strive to live the great truths given to us. This is elemental. Second, we ought to engage in various types of material service. We should aid the needy, work for social, economic, and legal justice, and foster the actualization of human well-being. Finally, and most importantly, we are called to engage in a spiritual ministry to the minds and souls of our fellows. This sharing and proclamation of the good news has, historically, effected the greatest transformation of human life and society of all of the forms of ministry. Spiritual ministry is the most vital and far-reaching way to share the great truths of revelation and experience.

As this service relates to the fifth epochal revelation, probably the most critical decision each of us must make is whether we are going to share this larger revelation of truth directly or indirectly, whether we are going to "bootleg" it or openly share it, whether we are going to be "closet" students of The URANTIA Book or identify ourselves with it openly in our daily life. After more than twenty years of experimenting with ways to "bootleg" the teachings of The URANTIA Book, I am convinced that only The URANTIA Book itself has the potential to bring a spiritual renaissance to our planet.

Most of the concepts of The URANTIA Book are already in the thought patterns of Western Civilization. It is the unique integration of these ideas in The URANTIA Book which makes them effective. Many theologians, ministers, and educators are currently presenting the essential truths of The URANTIA Book in their teachings. This is doing much good but it lacks the integrative spiritual vision and faith power of a revelatory breakthrough. Only the coherent message of The URANTIA Book itself has the dynamic to bring about a transformation of the contemporary human condition.

I recognize that such an open ministry is not for timid souls. It is difficult for people who are balanced, solid citizens in their communities to risk being viewed as "different" or belonging to some strange cult or movement. Let us not forget that pioneers always face difficulty and hardship. Pioneering



is a rigorous and lonely path of service. Do not imagine that opposition and oppression are only aberrations of the past. New and enlarged truth will be attack in every era of historical development. Nevertheless, for those who have courage guided by wisdom, bringing a knowledge of the fifth epochal revelation to the individuals and institutions of our world is one of the most important ministries of modern times. An Archangel of Nebadon reminds us, "The weak indulge in resolutions, but the strong act. Life is but a days work - do it well. The act is ours; the consequences God's." (556)

Whatever form of outreach ministry you should choose to engage in, let me share some principles which may help to guide this service. I would invite you to adapt, internalize, and live by the following seven principles of ministry.

1. Use wisdom and balance in all of your service. Avoid extremes, exhibitionism, oversell, and the spectacular. Learn to distinguish between artistic good taste and the theatrical. Remember that personal contact is more effective than impersonal mass communication. Start where people are, not where you are. Communicate in their frames of reference and anticipate their natural reactions. Combine the most expert knowledge with the highest values in all of your ministry. Master your mind through the power of the spirit. Be strong in the spirit; know that in liaison with God nothing can defeat the spiritual purposes of your life. Be fearless but act with discretion.
2. Let love create the atmosphere of all of your interpersonal relationships. Remember that you cannot communicate effectively with others unless you positively and unconditionally accept them with all of their imperfections. Strive to prevent your own biases and limitations from interfering or distorting your service to them. Support, stimulate, and help people; do not seek to coerce them. See all of your fellows as persons of worth and strive to build their self-confidence and self-respect. Be natural and genuine and enjoy their company. Serve out of love, a thankful heart, and the joy of the act itself. Ministry is an intrinsic activity of the creative mind and the loving soul. Extrinsic motivation in service compromises its spiritual value. Serving God even for good extrinsic purposes such as building your study group, society, or church, or even to bring about a spiritual renaissance limits its spiritual value and personal satisfaction. Minister out of the intrinsic motivation of love, thankfulness, and joy and the extrinsic repercussions or results will largely take care of themselves. Serve with the openness of creative love; but do not try to manipulate people.
3. Temper your personal convictions with philosophic objectivity. Always be honest and open. Cultivate freedom of opinion and respect the right of others to disagree with your most deeply held convictions. Honor each person's God-given right to self-determination. Try to establish common ground but do not contend with people. Let your enthusiasm for truth animate your discussions but never knowingly put people down or offend.
4. Recognize that evolution is the underlying principle of life. Do not expect immediate results. All growth is unconscious and has mustard seed beginnings. The roots of a new tree of life take decades to penetrate the rocks of tradition on which it is planted. Be patient but do not become the victim of a fearful "do-nothing" psychology and bury your talents and treasure in stagnation or cult obscurities. Be concerned about ministering

Understand the wisdom and effectiveness of small groups. These groups form coalitions and networks more open and dynamic than hierarchical bureaucracies and self-serving cults. Such a network is many times greater than the sum of its parts. It has multiple leadership, pluralistic policies, and its center is everywhere.



effectively but relatively unconcerned about results. Realize that your ministry must be planned and conducted in the context of the law of readiness. Always minister at the point of evolutionary readiness but do not confuse this basic preparation for the surface conditions of psychological and social readiness. All who have prophetic vision know that evolution, the plow of history, eventually breaks the crust of individual resistance and moves the clods of social stagnation. Be loyal and persistent in your service without needing to see results or to be honored by success. It is our privilege and responsibility to minister; the results are in the hands of God the Supreme. In all things cultivate in yourself the mind and attitude of the Supreme. The vicissitudes of time do not change the goals of eternity.

5. Be actively involved in routine, commonplace experiences. Grow, bloom, and bear fruit in the soil where you are planted. If possible, keep your old social and religious ties strong and healthy. Share at the level of spiritual acceptance. When you are a tadpole don't pretend to be a trout or an eagle. Only dedicated and creative tadpoking will bring you inner satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment. These mundane activities and identifications will bring a sense of proportion, genuineness, and integrity to your ministry. Forget the failures of the past and do not allow yourself to be preoccupied anticipating the future. Live in the present in constant fellowship with the Father and absorbed in the existential moment of experience.
6. Cultivate an active sense of humor. Humor helps us maintain a proper sense of perspective. You can carry useful man-sized or woman-sized loads when you get the world off your shoulders. Do not take yourself too seriously even though you are participating in important work. Be unconcerned about prestige and status. Strive to avoid self-contemplation and cultivate self-forgetfulness. Finite personalities can become tragic figures when they lose their sense of perspective and fail to appreciate the comedy of life. We need to laugh at ourselves and the frustrating, ridiculous, and absurd situations we encounter. A light hearted spirit can be a great asset in carrying the sometimes heavy burdens of ministry.
7. Above all, live with joy in your heart and find joy in your ministry. You belong to the Father's kingdom which has an eternal future of unimaginable adventure and reward. Nothing can long prevent the fulfillment of your most ardent spiritual hopes and fondest dreams. All who experience this faith in an eternal destiny live with irrepressible joy even in the midst of material hardship, social conflict, and seeming personal defeat. As you free yourself from the slavery of the lure of things, the adoration or criticism of people, and the importance or preoccupation with self, you will experience the liberating joys of service. You will also discover that in doing so you are free from the egocentric social pressure of being successful and establishing or maintaining a reputation. When our will is in harmony with the Universal Father, the joy of service also brings a deep inner peace. When you no longer experience this peace of mind and joy in your ministry, find another channel of service which does fill your heart with joy because you feel that you are where you belong, where your Heavenly Father wishes you to serve.



Let me now summarize what we have shared together. Jesus by example and teaching tells the one thing necessary in our relationship with the Universal Father is to experience a personal fellowship with him, a living faith. This living faith actuates three great spiritual truth responses:

1. Loving attitudes - toward God and man.
2. Dedicated action - service motivation.
3. Outreach ministry - communicating the good news to all the world.

These three great spiritual truth responses are augmented by the seven principles of ministry:

1. Wisdom initiation,
2. Love radiation,
3. Philosophical discretion,
4. Evolutionary consideration,
5. Commonplace participation,
6. Humor realization, and
7. Joyful consummation.

Now may living faith, the one all-encompassing requirement of sonship, inspire us to actualize the three great truths of service, guided and enhanced by the seven-fold principle of ministry. I wish you Godspeed in your adventure in service.

I should like to close with three verses of a prayer hymn written by Washington Gladden in 1879.

O Master, let me walk with Thee  
In lowly paths of service free;  
Tell me Thy secret; help me bear  
The strain of toil, the fret of care.

Help me the slow of heart to move  
By some clear, winning word of love;  
Teach me the wayward feet to stay,  
And guide them in the homeward way.

In hope that sends a shining ray  
Far down the future's broad'ning way,  
In peace that only Thou canst give,  
With Thee, O Master, let me live. Amen.