



How to
INTRODUCE
GROUPS
to The
URANTIA BOOK

TABLE of CONTENTS

PART ONE

Why group introductions are important

PART TWO

Planning and preparing for the introduction

PART THREE

The presentation

PART FOUR

After the presentation: the follow-up

PART ONE: Why group introductions are important

- ***Group introductions are helpful to people who are curious about The Urantia Book, but who don't know anyone who can answer their questions.***

Introductions can also be a great aid for helping readers describe the book more clearly to someone they want to introduce to *The Urantia Book*.

We have heard many stories while visiting with people who attend our group introductions, describing their search for "somebody who can tell me more about this book", or "I have friends who read it, but no one will talk to me about it" or "This book is incredible! Why haven't I heard about it before?" There is obviously a need for group introductions.

Some people are horrified by the prospect of presenting *The Urantia Book* in this way. They want to know, who gave us the authority to tell others about the book? Or, they ask, how do you know that you'll do an adequate job? What if you turn someone off to it instead?

We take these questions very seriously. It's a constant challenge to find new and better ways of reaching more people more effectively. Besides, we have to remember that we're not the only ones who are involved in the introduction.

Rely upon the Spirit of Truth

At our last introduction, 40 people attended who wanted to know more about *The*

Urantia Book. Many of them bought books, and many of them showed up at a follow-up study group that was a more in-depth presentation about the contents of the book.

At the beginning of the meeting, we asked people to introduce themselves. As the discussion went around the room, an interesting element began to surface. Although people said it in different ways, most of them had experienced a "shift" of some sort while listening to the group introduction the week before.

We heard comments like "I was listening to the introduction, and, I don't know, I just got this feeling like I really needed to find out more about this book" or "Something just sort of clicked in my head." We realized that what we were hearing was each person's description of having a "quickenning of the Spirit." ***We were not alone in our efforts; the Spirit of Truth was using this opportunity to let these people know that The Urantia Book had answers to some of their questions and they could benefit from reading the book.***

If we make every effort to create a presentation of *The Urantia Book* that is sincere, well-organized and sensitive to the people who attend such a presentation, we will be joined by spiritual agencies in our efforts. Don't underestimate the power of the Spirit.

Added Benefits

Something else that occurs during the planning and presenting of such a group introduction is the excitement and momentum that builds in our existing

readership. Sometimes introducing the book to people is scary, and doing it as a group gives us all an added boost of confidence. It's a privilege to tell others about *The Urantia Book*, and it's a joy to do it as a team.

At our first introduction, which was done in a reader's home, we had barely enough room for our guests. But our community was so excited about this presentation that they all showed up, in spite of our efforts to keep the crowd at a minimum.

It was almost comical. Local readers stood in the entryway of the house, straining their necks to get a look at these 60 strangers seated in the living room who wanted to know about our beloved book. Our group rose to the occasion at the reception after the presentation, as they mingled with the crowd and introduced themselves and answered questions from the newcomers. Our weekly study group attendance from people who were already readers increased dramatically, starting about a month before the planned introduction and

continuing on throughout the following year.

- ***But the best part about group introductions is seeing those new readers at a study group - new people who are excited about discovering The Urantia Book!***

It's so rewarding to see the look on the faces of new readers as they tell us about a fascinating paper they found while looking through the book during the week. Or to have them ask questions that have been unanswered all their lives and finally get answers that make sense.

When we planned the first introduction, we were simply following an intuition that such a presentation before a group of interested strangers might be helpful in spreading the teachings of *The Urantia Book*. And — in fact — it proved to be the right thing to do.

PART TWO: Planning and preparing for the introduction

The factors involved in planning an introduction include:

1. Letting people know about the event. A "Bring a Buddy" type of introduction requires that a letter be sent out to every known reader in the area, along with "invitations" for them to give to interested friends. *(A sample letter and invitation is included in this packet.)* A broader approach requires advertising in neighborhood circulars, or a local newspaper. Very often, religion pages in newspapers offer non-profit

groups a half-price rate for advertisements. *(Samples of ads which have been placed are included in this packet.)*

2. Finding a place. You'll need room for registration, refreshments and room for socializing, comfortable chairs and a stage or open space at the front, as well as an adequate sound system.

3. Registration and materials. It helps to have people RSVP if you advertise in the paper. This way, you can have name tags

prepared and have a rough estimate of how many people to expect. We have well over 80% of the people who call actually show up at the introduction. If it's a "Bring a Buddy" intro, you would benefit from following the letter you send out with a phone call to encourage people to invite friends and to find out how many people they are bringing.

- ***Handouts are helpful to give to people to browse through while they are waiting for the presentation to begin and for them to refer to when they go home.***

We have usually provided a folder with the following materials: *A brief introduction letter* (included in the back of this packet;) several mustard seeds, ordered from Jesusonian Foundation; *Meredith Sprunger's article about the origin of the book* (also included in this packet;) *A local newsletter*, if you have one and if it's of professional quality; a nicely formatted page with information on any and all Urantia Book activities in your local area, including study groups, worship services, salon/discussion groups, auxiliary groups such as men's or women's support groups or service groups. Include phone numbers and addresses as well as brief descriptions of the events.

You should also include an invitation to a more in-depth introduction to the book which is scheduled soon after the group introduction they are attending. (Sample formats are included in the back of this packet.)

- ***Have several sign-in sheets for people to use to write in their***

names, addresses and phone numbers when they first enter.

We have never had any problem with people being willing to do this. Later, you may want to send the people who attended a flyer about an upcoming event. We've "re-involved" several people this way by continuing to contact them. Don't be worried about being pushy. You are simply letting them know about upcoming events, not soliciting money or imposing on them.

The reason that we suggest several sheets is to prevent a bottleneck at the door and to allow them plenty of time to legibly write the information. It helps to have someone there to discreetly read the name and, if it's not clear, simply say, "Is that Jeanney or Jeanine? Hi, my name is Shelly."

This sign-up list is like gold; these people have already made an effort to find out more about the book. If they go home and never hear from *you* again, you may never hear from *them* again. Keep in mind these people don't know you and may need to be encouraged to come to a study group.

Try to have names printed out on labels from a computer from your RSVP list, as well as extras. If you don't have an RSVP list, have several stacks of name tags with felt tip pens.

Have Urantia Books Available!

Most important of all, **you must have Urantia Books available for sale.** There's no use in telling people how wonderful this book is if they have to wait four weeks for a bookstore to special order it. We were fortunate enough to have ordered our three books each before the Urantia Foundation shut down distribution. If you don't have

any, get creative. Buy some in advance through several bookstores in your area and sell them for the same price you paid for them.

If you're not sure of how to proceed with keeping books stocked in local bookstores, Jesusonian Foundation has information — call (303) 581-0456.

We have always encouraged prospective readers to look through one of the books that is for sale during the presentation, making sure that they know Urantia Books are for sale and they must return it before they leave. If they've never opened *The Urantia Book* before, this will be a very important part of their evening.

4. Refreshments. It is essential to have a social time after the presentation for people to process what they've just heard. We offer desserts and tea and coffee.

At our last introduction, we rented a hotel conference room. Although they were not in the habit of letting organizations bring their own food, our coordinator talked them into it. After all, we are a nonprofit organization with little money to spend and we were not charging for the evening. We

did purchase our coffee and tea through the hotel, however.

- ***Make it nice - these people are your honored guests. This will be the time that your people mill about and introduce themselves, making personal contact with these people, sometimes for the first time.***

5. Atmosphere. Since you will probably need a sound system anyway, you can play music through the system at the beginning and the end of the event. Don't forget, these people know nothing about you, so keep it generic. They are trying to classify your group. You may think that Gregorian chanting is very inspiring, but they may think it's a tape of your last study group!

Part Three: The Presentation

- ***We can tell you about our presentations, but, ultimately, you'll have to decide on the best approach for your audience.***

You may have advertised one of two different formats; the general overview of the book or the specific topic in relation to *The Urantia Book*, such as what the book

says about our relationship to God, how it fits in with the philosophy of *The Course in Miracles*, etc.

We've stayed with the general overview presentation, but hope to present special topics in the future. We believe we can greatly improve our own introductions, so please share any ideas you come up with.

At our first group introduction, we had four different presenters cover the four parts of the book in ten minutes each. ***One***

caution: The presentation could run a long time if you don't keep each presenter to a minimum.

It helps to have the presenters give their talks to each other and several other people at least twice before the actual event to get feedback. You might have a couple of non-reader friends that would agree to listen as well.

If you have people who are good presenters, by all means use them. Presenters need to convey a sense of sincerity and warmth, and sound knowledgeable and confident. This last requirement is important. Your presenters must approach their talk from the standpoint that the audience doesn't know who a Lanonandek Son is, or can't fathom (or believe) that there are 700,000 Creator Sons in the universe of universes!

We include a short slide show in our presentations. It's available for your use if you'd like to borrow it. It's a short presentation featuring several readers talking about how the book has affected their lives. The sound portion is done with a professional audio background and the slides of the people talking are professional and appealing. This slide show gives the added dimension of another type of media for the presentation. It is shown after the four presenters.

You'll need an effective emcee at the beginning to welcome everyone and to close the presentation, inviting them to stay for refreshments, telling them about the books for sale, etc. We have our emcee introduce the first presenter and then have the presenters introduce the person following them.

Part Four: After the Presentation: The Follow-up

- ***The follow-up to your group introduction is just as important as the actual presentation itself — in fact follow-up may be the single most important ingredient to lasting success!***

As you probably remember, coming to *The Urantia Book* for the first time can be an overwhelming experience. Sometimes we need a little encouragement to get acquainted with all of these new words and concepts.

Sometimes, in our already too-busy schedule, it seems easier to put it off until we have the time to investigate it more thoroughly.

For that reason, staying in contact with new readers is extremely important. Some of us knew what we had when we first opened the book, but others came to that sense gradually. For people who need some time to realize the importance of this new discovery, having someone who calls them from time to time or getting flyers in the mail about social or worship events in their local Urantia community can make all the difference in whether or not they continue to read the book.

Our follow-up consists of two areas: the first is an in-depth overview of the book that usually meets four times over a month's period. We've tried it in less time, but we strongly recommend taking at least two evenings to do an in-depth introduction to

the book. The people who attend the in-depth overview classes have already been to the original introduction and might have even purchased their own book. Now, they want a better idea of the book's teachings.

Of course, the follow-up is strongly emphasized during the first introduction and is featured on a sheet in their take-home material. We want people to know that a real get-down-to-business description of the book is available in addition to the introductory presentation. It seems that the decision-making process of whether or not they want to read *The Urantia Book* takes up a lot of space in a person's mind that first night, making an in-depth presentation of the book overwhelming at that time.

How you approach this in-depth overview introduction is up to you. We've done it several ways, usually creating a "lesson plan" and then searching through our available readers to find the right person to talk about each subject or part of the book. (See appendix for a sample lesson plan). You probably have certain people who have expertise or special interest in certain parts of the book as well.

The overview class is usually held at the same place that the introduction was held. If that's not possible, the next best place, or perhaps just as good, is at the home where they will eventually be attending a study group. We also serve refreshments at the end of each class, although the group is not as well-acquainted and doesn't socialize as much as a regular study group in the beginning.

Consider a "new readers group"

- ***If you have eight or more people who appear to be willing to attend a study***

group, you might consider starting a "new readers" group just for the people who have come from your introduction.

As a matter of fact, if you have a significant response from your outreach before your introduction, you should go ahead and commit to a new readers study group and have it printed up in the activities sheet in their take-home material.

We have started a new readers group after each introduction, and have developed a whole new community of readers. We have a team of four people who are scheduled once a month to lead the new readers group, and who prepare in advance with cross-references and questions for discussion.

We find it effective to start new readers with *The Life and Teachings of Jesus*. It's important to let the newcomers know that they are also welcome to attend other study groups, although the format will not always be as easy as the new readers group.

If your existing study group is small, perhaps the members would be willing to make some changes for the new readers. For example: it's important to leave plenty of time for discussion for new readers' questions. The only danger we've found is that we all tend to think we're terribly profound and we talk *too* much. We have a tendency to over-explain things to these new readers and have to make an effort to return to the text.

A second area of important follow-up is the need to personally stay in contact with the new readers. During the initial group introduction, have a quick huddle at the end of the evening with those

experienced readers who have mingled with the crowd. Go through your sign-up sheets. Find out who talked to whom during the refreshment time, and give those readers names and phone numbers. They can call the new readers on their list in a week or so, to see if they have any questions and to personally invite them to a study group.

If you are particularly sensitive to a new reader and are genuinely motivated to support their discovery of the book, you need not worry about being pushy. If they don't want to be contacted, they'll tell you.

- *We would have a lot fewer people who are now involved in our group if we hadn't followed up the first meeting with a few friendly phone calls.*

It's a good idea to have a purely social event shortly after the introduction. This is a non-threatening way of getting to know prospective readers better and introducing them to your wonderful community of readers. Inviting them to a well-presented worship service is also helpful.

If you have a women's corps or men's group in your area, you'll find that the newcomers will respond very well to being included in a service group of Urantia Book readers.

Catch The Spirit!

Few things are more exciting than bringing a friend to *The Urantia Book*. And perhaps nothing is more rewarding than meeting new friends because of the book.

We've been blessed with the addition of many talented, wonderful people in our group because of these introductions. We've been rewarded by our efforts time and time again when someone tells us :

"I have been searching for answers about God all of my life. When I saw your ad in the paper, something told me to go and listen to your introduction. Now I know what I've been searching for all of these years. This book has changed my life."

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*People are out there
who are hungry for new truth.
Help bring them to The Urantia Book!
Make group introductions a part of your
Urantia Book community!*