

21 STEPS
TO A
SPIRITUAL AWAKENING



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FOREWORD

The concept of 21 Steps had its basis in the author's appreciation of the 12-Step program of Alcoholics Anonymous as a powerful instrument of spiritual growth. The quotations themselves are from The Urantia Book, a work which has made a dramatic impact on the author's life. The Urantia Book itself has no "program," but the immense benefits of Alcoholics Anonymous' step-by-step method caused the author/compiler to reflect on what such a program from The Urantia Book might resemble were it to exist. The narrative introducing each step is by the author, and the arrangement of selections is according to his conception of the book's cardinal spiritual teachings.

Citations at the end of each quotation refer to Paper: Section. Paragraph in The Urantia Book.

STEP 1: RECOGNIZE YOUR NEEDS

Recognize the spiritual emptiness of your life and admit you are powerless, by your own strength, to correct your personal shortcomings.

What you have is not enough; if it were, you would never seek. The soul has an embedded hunger which things cannot sate, and which knows its incompleteness apart from God. The multiform variety and imagined obligations of life offer continual distraction, and often tragedy alone brings you face to face with your souls' deepest needs, impelling you to seek help from beyond.

Philosophies, goods, thrills, ambitions, and vanities crowd your mind, all clamoring to be heard, all saying, "I am what you really need," but the aftertaste is ashen. Deep within, you know what you need—Who you need—for when the crowd thins, the inner self cries, "Is this all?" and you lie alone at night and ponder. The world's recognition and treasure beckon, but for what? Empty pretension, for the respectability of your public self masks an unplumbed pit of manic fears and half-broke lusts, scarcely hidden beneath the manicured lawns of your colonnaded mansions.

In grief, misfortune, distress, or tribulation, obvious insufficiency impels you to look beyond yourself for strength. But why not avoid that suffering by laying up provisions before the winter storms arrive, when ice blocks the harbor and hunting is hard? Why not fill your larders with survival stores, which you need even now?

References from The Urantia Book:

The Father is not in spiritual hiding, but so many of his creatures have hidden themselves away in the mists of their own willful decisions and for the time being have separated themselves from the communion of his

Who has not been prisoner to his own moods? Who has never felt force-marched, lock-step, down unwelcome paths, driven by dark lusts and fears to end the hates? The forbidding cavern yawns—the smallest misstep sends you careening down its crumbling walls. But few will seek help until convinced they cannot arrive under their ship's own power, feet on the bridge and hands on the helm. Too often you must first shipwreck, clutching cold ice while your ship of dreams sinks beneath the numbing waters.

It is natural to want all your personal hopes and dreams fulfilled, but such cannot be. A navy of a thousand admirals, each with his separate plan, tramples itself and loses the war. It is better there be One in charge who knows your ways better than you yourself, and in whose destiny you find your highest good. But as long as personal goals reign supreme, and your own ways seem sufficient, you are not impelled to seek God's will. Life must then teach you those lessons you refused to learn on your own.

The spiritual path begins when you first seek to make sense of life and your place in it. God longs to make himself known to you, but he intrudes not unbidden; you first must tire of emptiness. If circumstances are too comfortable perhaps only tragedy can shake you loose and make you feel unease with things as they are, and help you recognize how little you are able, by yourself, to make sense of your world.

spirit and the spirit of his Son by the choosing of their own perverse ways and by the indulgence of the self-assertiveness of their intolerant minds and unspiritual natures. 5:1.10

The keys of the kingdom of heaven are: sincerity, more sincerity, and more sincerity. All men have these keys. Men use them—advance in spirit status—by decisions, by more decisions, and by more decisions. 39:4.14

Spiritual progress is predicated on intellectual recognition of spiritual poverty coupled with the self-consciousness of perfection-hunger, the desire to know God and be like him, the wholehearted purpose to do the will of the Father in heaven. Spiritual growth is first an awakening to needs, next a discernment of meanings, and then a discovery of values. 100:2.1&2

“Ganid, the man was not hungry for truth. He was not dissatisfied with himself. He was not ready to ask for help, and the eyes of his mind were not open to receive light for the soul. That man was not ripe for the harvest of salvation; he must be allowed more time for the trials and difficulties of life to prepare him for the reception of wisdom and higher learning.” 132:7.2

Only those who feel poor in spirit will ever hunger for righteousness. Only the humble seek for divine strength and crave spiritual power. 140:5.8

“[Job] ascended to those spiritual heights where he could sincerely say, ‘I abhor myself’; then was there granted him the salvation of a *vision of God*.” 148:6.3

Never hesitate to admit failure. Make no attempt to hide failure under deceptive smiles and beaming optimism. It sounds well always to claim success, but the end results are appalling. Such a technique leads directly to the creation of a world of unreality and to the inevitable crash of ultimate disillusionment. Success may generate courage and promote confidence, but wisdom comes only from the experiences of adjustment to the results of one’s failures. Men who prefer optimistic illusions to reality can never become wise. Only those who face facts and adjust them to ideals can achieve wisdom. . . . Those timid souls who can only keep up the struggle of life by the aid of continuous false illusions of success are doomed to suffer failure and experience defeat as they ultimately awaken from the dream world of their own imaginations. 160:4.7&8

“What I am telling you is well illustrated by two men who went into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed to himself: ‘O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of men, extortioners, unlearned, unjust, adulterers, or even like this publican. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift his eyes to heaven but smote his breast, saying, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner.’” 167:5.1

Selfish men and women simply will not pay such a price for even the greatest spiritual treasure ever offered mortal man. Only when man has become sufficiently disillusioned by the sorrowful disappointments attendant upon the foolish and deceptive pursuits of selfishness, and subsequent to the discovery of the barrenness of formalized religion, will he be disposed to turn wholeheartedly to the gospel of the kingdom, the religion of Jesus of Nazareth. 195:9.7

STEP 2: BELIEVE IN GOD

Believe in God, and that he indwells you as a spiritual Father and loving friend.

Without God in heaven the earth is meaningless, and all that lives hereon. But where is He that you might believe? Where was the Father during all those years of unknowing, when you sought but found Him not? Did you fail to seek in earnest?

You find Him in your heart once you believe in Him and His love. He rides above the clouds; He knows the way you take and why, and longs to talk with you, His child. You feel His presence beside you as you walk along a mountain trail, but know Him truly only in the silence of your soul.

Your moment of knowing may be as sudden as lightning striking a lonely oak on a windswept hill, or it might grow gradually, like fog burning off a mountain lake. God spoke to Paul through light and blindness, to others as gently as autumn's last leaf drifts down onto new snow. God's presence is in the air you breathe and in every star's reflected rays, but until you find Him in your soul, nature's messengers bear scant meaning.

The God of universes lives in unfathomable glory, but His second home is in the humble heart. Until you know Him, the Father dwells in darkness, as unheard as the wings of a dove flying above a forgotten field. But look! He is present in the shadow of your approach, behind the door, away from life's confusion, available anytime, anywhere, to

those who seek. In the stilled, attentive mind you sense his spirit, which ever works by love. His arms comfort you against the terrors of the night, and His lips brush your cheeks with a morning kiss. His love song floats down with the morning's sunlight and cheers you for the approaching day.

Believing in God opens pathways of faith through which universal energy courses down to heal your emotions, rekindle your hopes, and nourish your soul. Power from beyond infuses your life's lush, overflowing power which before was only dimly suspected. Life's hues register new texture, brilliance, and significance as patterns of eternal purpose reveal themselves in the commonplace. Events which before tumbled forth like random noise and chance, now suggest the coordinated intercession of a loving Father's hand. You learn to act on your spiritual beliefs and enjoy doing what is right, for as you do, truth is revealed and you see the face of God.

Within your heart grows the conviction that God has work for you to do, important work, a unique role in a universal drama which will uplift every weary heart in the vast creation. You crave to be at this work, to hear and heed the cues of the Supreme Director. You know your stumbling flaws and lethargy all too well, but also, you know who is all-powerful and whose greatness can provide all you lack. The Creator makes you more responsive to the leadings of truth.

References from The Urantia Book:

The love of the Father absolutely individualizes each personality as a unique child of the Universal Father, a child without duplicate in infinity, a will creature irreplaceable in all eternity. The Father's love glorifies each

child of God, illuminating each member of the celestial family, sharply silhouetting the unique nature of each personal being against the impersonal levels that lie outside the fraternal circuit of the Father of all. 12:7.9

But you cannot become so absolutely certain of a fellow being's reality as you can of the reality of the presence of God that lives within you. 16:9.4

Thus it may be seen that religious longings and spiritual urges are not of such a nature as would merely lead men to *want* to believe in God, but rather are they of such nature and power that men are profoundly impressed with the conviction that they *ought* to believe in God. The sense of evolutionary duty and the obligations consequent upon the illumination of revelation make such a profound impression upon man's moral nature that he finally reaches that position of mind and that attitude of soul where he concludes that he *has no right not to believe in God*. The higher and superphilosophic wisdom of such enlightened and disciplined individuals ultimately instructs them that to doubt God or distrust his goodness would be to prove untrue to the *reallest* and *deepest* thing within the human mind and soul—the divine Adjuster. 101:1.7

God is so all real and absolute that no material sign of proof or no demonstration of so-called miracle may be offered in testimony of his reality. Always will you know him because you trust him, and your belief in him is wholly based on your personal participation in the divine manifestations of his infinite reality.

The indwelling Thought Adjuster unfailingly arouses in man's soul a true and searching hunger for perfection together with a far-reaching curiosity which can be adequately satisfied only by communion with God, the divine source of that Adjuster. The hungry soul of man refuses to be satisfied with anything less than the personal realization of the living God. 102:1.5&6

Of God, the most inescapable of all presences, the most real of all facts, the most living of all truths, the most loving of all friends, and the most divine of all values, you have the right to be the most certain of all universe experiences. 102:7.10

Men all too often forget that God is the greatest experience in human existence. Other experiences are limited in their nature and content, but the experience of God has no limits save those of the creature's comprehension capacity, and this very experience is in itself capacity enlarging. When men search for God, they are searching for everything. When they find God, they have found everything. 117:6.9

While sojourning at Amathus, Jesus spent much time with the apostles instructing them in the new concept of God; again and again did he impress upon them that *God is a Father*; not a great and supreme bookkeeper who is chiefly engaged in making damaging entries against his erring children on earth, recordings of sin and evil to be used against them when he subsequently sits in judgment upon them as the just Judge of all creation. 141:4.1

“And you, Thomas, who said you would not believe unless you could see me and put your finger in the nail marks of my hands . . . what will you say to your brethren? You will acknowledge the truth, for already in your heart you had begun to believe even when you so stoutly asserted your unbelief. Your doubts, Thomas, always most stubbornly assert themselves just as they are about to crumble. Thomas, I bid you be not faithless but believing—and I know you will believe, even with a whole heart.” 191:5.4

STEP 3: ACCEPT GOD'S GRACE

Recognize that you cannot produce spiritual reactions to life in the absence of divine power and see that all spiritual qualities are gifts of God which you cannot earn, but may freely accept.

God's grace might seem a wind that blows whithersoever it wills, but its source is no secret. All good things descend from the Father of mercy, and until you realize that, you struggle against life with shortened sword and battered helmet. You cannot achieve spiritual goals by unaided human power—God alone carries you beyond your limitations into self-realization. You find fulfillment in the relationship, and God finds another child as you accept the divine spirit He has given to indwell your mind.

God's grace is the storehouse of your possibilities, from which awaken gifts and talents that exceed your human capacities. His healing balm overcomes your mental, emotional, and spiritual handicaps; His mountain-moving power hacks out new paths of achievement in the confused jungle of your life.

Through grace you find the Source of life; through grace you are emboldened to achieve; through grace you learn to love. Grace persuades you that an all-wise and all-powerful Deity has assumed responsibility for your personal well-being, the security of those you love, and the success of work you undertake in faith. God enables your actions in faith to be massive and decisive, undergirded as they are by confidence in His sovereignty. In Your human capacities you are weak, hesitant, and fearful, painfully aware how tenuous and defective are your pitiful stores of courage and wisdom. But grace has commissioned you to go forth as an agent of a Being with unlimited power to act in and

through you. The Father guides your steps, and even if you misunderstand his directions—provided you have done so in faith—He reconfigures those partial errors into experiences which profit all involved.

Your new spiritual leadings will be unflinchingly consistent with what, deep within you've always known is true. Living truth, welling up from within, has freed you from slavish conformity to conventional patterns of thought and action. You are bound by God's spirit, not by the outward forms or practices of humanity.

Your new life is a gift from God, not bought with human coin or earned through self-sacrifice, self-help, or positive thinking. Commitment, acted upon, becomes faith, down whose channels God pours that inner peace which alone makes life worth living.

Grace supports you in every trial; grace gives you power when you are weak; grace comforts you when you are downcast. Grace issues from the Master Builder whose eternal design encompasses all that you might do or be, every possibility for your future achievement. God has supplied you with life itself, and apart from him you are bereft, abandoned, and useless. God knows your name and the path you tread. He leads you by the hand through the commonplace soil of human existence.

We thank you, Father, for giving us our lives, for all the varied circumstances which constitute this earthly environment, and for the eternal fitness of its arrangement. Give us courage to act on your grace, that our lives profit both ourselves and our world.

References from The Urantia Book:

The consciousness of a victorious human life on earth is born of that creature faith which dares to challenge each recurring episode of existence when confronted with the awful spectacle of human limitations, by the unfailing declaration: Even if I cannot do this, there lives in me one who can and will do it, a part of the Father-Absolute of the universe of universes. And that is “the victory which overcomes the world, even your faith.” 4:4.9

This covenant of Melchizedek with Abraham represents the great Urantian agreement between divinity and humanity whereby God agrees to do *everything*; man only agrees to *believe* God’s promises and follow his instructions. 93:6.4

Man’s sole contribution to growth is the mobilization of the total powers of his personality—living faith. 100:3.7

Among other things, the Adjuster pleaded “that he more faithfully give me his sincere co-operation, more cheerfully endure the tasks of my emplacement, more faithfully carry out the program of my arrangement, more patiently go through the trials of my selection, more persistently and cheerfully tread the path of my choosing, more humbly receive credit that may accrue as a result of my ceaseless endeavors—thus transmit my admonition to the man of my indwelling.” 110:7.10

“By the old way you seek to suppress, obey, and conform to the rules of living; by the new way you are first *transformed* by the Spirit of Truth and thereby strengthened in your inner soul by the constant spiritual renewing of your mind, and so are you endowed with the power of the certain and joyous performance of the gracious, acceptable, and perfect will of God. Forget not—it is your personal faith in the exceedingly great and precious promises of God that ensures your becoming partakers of the divine nature.” 143:2.4

“It is the very goodness of God that leads men into true and genuine repentance. Your secret of the mastery of self is bound up with your faith in the indwelling spirit, which ever works by love. Even this saving faith you have not of yourself; it also is the gift of God.” 143:2.7

In all praying, remember that sonship is a *gift*. No child has aught to do with *earning* the status of son or daughter. The earth child comes into being by the will of its parents. Even so, the child of God comes into grace and the new life of the spirit by the will of the Father in heaven. Therefore must the kingdom of heaven—divine sonship—be *received* as by a little child. 144:4.3

“Salvation is the gift of the Father and is revealed by his Sons. Acceptance by faith on your part makes you a partaker of the divine nature, a son or a daughter of God. By faith you are justified; by faith are you saved; and by this same faith are you eternally advanced in the way of progressive and divine perfection.” 150:5.3

“You cannot buy salvation; you cannot earn righteousness. Salvation is the gift of God, and righteousness is the natural fruit of the spirit-born life of sonship in the kingdom.” 150:5.5

“You see, then, that the Father gives salvation to the children of men, and this salvation is a free gift to all who have the faith to receive sonship in the divine family. There is nothing man can do to earn this salvation. Works of self-righteousness cannot buy the favor of God, and much praying in public will not atone for lack of living faith in the heart.” 167:5.1

“It is your faith that saves your souls. Salvation is the gift of God to all who believe they are his sons. But be not deceived; while salvation is the free gift of God and is bestowed upon all who accept it by faith, there follows the experience of bearing the fruits of this spirit life as it is lived in the flesh.” 193:1.2

STEP 4: ADMIT YOUR SHORTCOMINGS

Acknowledge and sincerely repent your misdeeds, confess these wrongs to God and confide in a trusted friend.

Without the opportunity to err, higher loyalties could never grow. “Yes, I will” would be meaningless if one could not have said, “No, I will not.” The freedom God has given you to live and act in the world ensures that you will make mistakes, otherwise what appears to be a sea of freedom would be a desert mirage.

But at the same time these inevitable mistakes of immature choosing neutralize and burden you with guilt and self-doubt, make you a prisoner of the past, and accuse you before your Maker. God’s design for life in this world makes full allowance for your errors. Through spiritual attainment, however, the Father provides you certain means to triumph over the shadows of unreality, to grow through the problems borne of your uneven responses to life’s challenges. You thereby gain the strength, conviction, and humility which result from personally experiencing life in all its reality — and sometimes its harshness.

Sin, never accidental, requires your premeditated decision to violate what you know is right, and apart from such willful thought or action, there is no sin. Your conscience may accuse you before society’s mores, but sin requires deliberate disloyalty to what is highest and truest in the human heart and soul — God himself.

Sin separates you from the happy and stabilizing consciousness of God’s presence and disrupts your relationships with your fellows. You feel guilty, disappointed with

yourself, cut off from the world. Sin leaves you at a loss to know how to make things right. It leaves you in doubt about your courage or ability to extract yourself from the tangled troubles of your own reckless devising.

Once committed, more is required to be shed of your complex webs of deceit than merely wishing them away or, more insidiously, repressing their memories deep into mental crevices, there to fester and noxiously burst forth at some moment of future stress. The solution is simple honesty. Freedom from the tyranny of sin and guilt requires your courage to confront and confess every wrong you have committed: against God, yourself, or others — by thought, word or deed — without excuse or attenuation. You must lay it all out, once and for all, sins that seem inconsequential as well as major, that you be no longer burdened by the dead weight of their accusing memory.

Those sins you are most uncomfortable acknowledging are precisely the ones posing maximum danger, and partial confession will not produce the end you most desire: freedom from the errors of your past and a heart God has made pure. You therefore sorrowfully confess to God your wrongdoings in all their particulars, not that he was unaware of them, but rather to define the issues before the full light of your own consciousness. You tell the Father of your sincere determination never to fall into such traps again, and ask God’s forgiveness for every one of these sins, that their debilitating presence be cleansed from every recess of your mind and memories.

Next, you summon the courage to repeat all you have told your Father to a carefully

chosen friend or counselor, one who would never betray your trust. At the appointed time, you set forth the story in the light least favorable to yourself, avoiding any temptation to invalidate the confession of your reprehensible conduct by extenuating excuses.

Your goal is freedom and righteousness, and this can only be won by making a clean sweep of all the missteps of your pasts. Stripped bare of pretense, your pasts have been offered to God, and now you humble yourself before the world as represented by the friend or counselor to whom you tell your story. You serve up these unfortunate aspects of your pasts without pleasure, like a diligent housekeeper scouring out hidden corners for dirt and clutter.

It is with immense pain that you recite these past sins, but full disclosure eviscerates their dark hegemony. Unearthed and exposed, stripped of their pretense to sovereignty, they dissolve into shadow phantasms of nothingness. Apart from making amends to those your actions have harmed, you must reflect no more on these past sins, for to do so only resurrects their pernicious power, weakening you by calling into question God's

mercy and forgiveness. You have confessed your sins and they are forgiven. In the past, concealing these sins doubled their horrid fascination. Exposed to sunlight, their hold over you resolves harmlessly, if only you avoid the temptation to reminisce over those regrettable experiences which caused you and others so much pain.

When you make peace with yourself, you experience peace with the world. In confession you cast off that false pride which emotionally constricted you, preventing you from forgiving others or accepting yourself. Confession will give birth to new self-respect based on a reestablished relationship with God. Setting things right with God, you became right with yourself and the world.

From time to time you will do things which make you unhappy with yourself, but through it all the Father continues to love you and give you the power to overcome these reminders that you have not ceased to be human. Confession purges these missteps, strips their power, removes every blemish from your soul, and makes you clean, whole, restored, revived, pure in heart, and free to live the life God has planned for you.

References from The Urantia Book:

Never, in all your ascent to Paradise, will you gain anything by impatiently attempting to circumvent the established and divine plan by short cuts, personal inventions, or other devices for improving on the way of perfection, to perfection, and for eternal perfection. 75:8.5

Sin must be redefined as deliberate disloyalty to Deity. There are degrees of disloyalty: the partial loyalty of indecision; the divided loyalty of confliction; the dying loyalty of indifference; and the death of loyalty exhibited in devotion to godless ideals. 89:10.2

The confession of sin is a manful repudiation of disloyalty, but it in no wise mitigates the time-space consequences of such disloyalty. But confession—sincere recognition of the nature of sin—is essential to religious growth and spiritual progress. 89:10.5

The endowment of imperfect beings with freedom entails inevitable tragedy, and it is the nature of the perfect

ancestral Deity to universally and affectionately share these sufferings in loving companionship. 110:0.1

“And have you not also read in the Scriptures where it says: ‘He looks down upon men, and if any will say: I have sinned and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, then will God deliver that man’s soul from darkness, and he shall see the light’?” 130:8.2

“Make an end of your misery by loathing sin. When you look up to the Noble One, turn away from sin with a whole heart. Make no apology for evil; make no excuse for sin. By your efforts to make amends for past sins you acquire strength to resist future tendencies thereto. Restraint is born of repentance. Leave no fault unconfessed to the Noble One.” 131:3.3

“If a man recognizes the evil of his ways and repents of sin from the heart, then may he seek forgiveness; he may escape the penalty; he may change calamity into blessing.” 131:8.5

“Your Father even loves the wicked and is always kind to the ungrateful. If more human beings could only know about the goodness of God, they would certainly be led to repent of their evil ways and forsake all known sin.” 131:10.4

And all such true faith is predicated on profound reflection, sincere self-criticism, and uncompromising moral consciousness. 132:3.5

“Many times, when you have done evil, you have thought to charge up your acts to the influence of the evil one when in reality you have but been led astray by your own natural tendencies. Did not the Prophet Jeremiah long ago tell you that the human heart is deceitful above all things and sometimes even desperately wicked? How easy for you to become self-deceived and thereby fall into foolish fears, divers lusts, enslaving pleasures, malice, envy, and even vengeful hatred!” 143:2.5

“When men believe this gospel, which is a revelation of the goodness of God, they will be led to voluntary repentance of all known sin. Realization of sonship is incompatible with the desire to sin.” 150:5.5

The first step in the solution of any problem is to locate the difficulty, to isolate the problem, and frankly to recognize its nature and gravity. The great mistake is that, when life problems excite your profound fears, you refuse to recognize them. Likewise, when the acknowledgment of your difficulties entails the reduction of your long-cherished conceit, the admission of envy, or the abandonment of deep-seated prejudices, the average person prefers to cling to the old illusions of safety and to the long-cherished false feelings of security. Only a brave person is willing honestly to admit, and fearlessly to face, what a sincere and logical mind discovers. 160:1.7

Devotion, to the Pharisee, was a means of inducing self-righteous inactivity and the assurance of false spiritual security; devotion, to the publican, was a means of stirring up his soul to the realization of the need for repentance, confession, and the acceptance, by faith, of merciful forgiveness. 167:5.2

Not until the cock crowed did it occur to Peter that he had denied his Master. Not until Jesus looked upon him, did he realize that he had failed to live up to his privileges as an ambassador of the kingdom.

Having taken the first step along the path of compromise and least resistance, there was nothing apparent to Peter but to go on with the course of conduct decided upon. It requires a great and noble character, having started out wrong, to turn about and go right. All too often one’s own mind tends to justify continuance in the path of error when once it is entered upon. 184:2.11&12

As you look back upon this tragedy, you conceive that Judas went wrong, primarily, because he was very markedly an isolated personality, a personality shut in and away from ordinary social contacts. He persistently refused to confide in, or freely fraternize with, his fellow apostles. 193:4.2

Judas persistently refused to confide in his brethren. When he was impelled, by the accumulation of his emotional conflicts, to seek relief in self-expression, he invariably sought the advice and received the unwise consolation of his unspiritual relatives or those chance acquaintances who were either indifferent, or actually hostile, to the welfare and progress of the spiritual realities of the heavenly kingdom, of which he was one of the twelve consecrated ambassadors on earth. 193:4.3

[Judas] disliked to discuss his personal problems with his immediate associates; he refused to talk over his difficulties with his real friends and those who truly loved him. In all the years of their association he never once went to the Master with a purely personal problem. 193:4.10

STEP 5: FORGIVE OTHERS

With God's help, forgive every person who ever wronged you.

Imagine the bitterness of a world in which no one forgave. In olden times, determination to seek revenge dominated men's lives, and imagined slights led to feuds lasting generations. Ethnic and religious hatreds plague our world, leading to senseless wars in which all parties lose. Misguided pride, often blasphemously attributed to religious duty, causes men to act wholly contrary to the spirit of the religion in whose name their atrocities are perpetrated.

Now is your opportunity to break these bitter cycles and free your brothers from their burdens of guilt with the same forgiveness by which God gave you new beginnings. Forgiveness is a contagious power which can instantly heal long-festered wounds in those with whom you are estranged. When the wrong done you cuts too deep, it may not appear humanly possible to forgive, but even then, God's grace makes all things possible. In such a case, you simply forgive to the extent you are able, and ask the Father to complete the process later.

That you forgive is essential to your own spiritual health. If you wish to know the fullness of God's forgiveness, you must forgive those who have wronged you. The two actions are inseparable, because harbored resentment closes chokes the channel through which God's forgiveness flows. Heartfelt forgiveness releases divine energy which unshackles your souls from evil moorings. It is rain on a barren hill which makes dormant flowers bloom; it uproots dark thorns and heals devouring cancers in our resentful hearts. Forgiveness breaks the bonds which

held you to your adversaries in unwilling embrace, the chains which lashed you to those you hated most. Even if your brothers cannot immediately reciprocate, forgiveness frees you from the emotional prison of poisonous feelings toward them, and you can go your way in peace.

To forgive injury takes less than some might imagine; hate and resentment are but attitudes, not blood or bone. Forgiveness is within your easy reach, and only stubbornness or pride can hold you back from enjoying its quick fruits of spiritual attainment. How can you hesitate to forgive your brothers when God has dealt so generously with you, and when all logic tells you you are better off so doing? What morbid pleasure is there in nursing grudges which harm you with their every reference and rob you of the joy which is your birthright?

By love God has forgiven you, and in this new relationship you find power to forgive others. In forgiving, you restore your brother and become yourself restored by the surging Source of all restoration.

You know the Father's will, and what you must do. You know revenge by its fruits, and forgiveness as well. You must fully forgive your every brother, that resentments stalk not your dreams this night, that guilt be relieved, friendships restored, and God returned to your relationships. *This* is the day God has given you to cast off every debilitating cycle of revenge and anger, and as you take the initiative to forgive, his spirit rests gently upon your souls. In forgiveness, the Father reveals his name, which is Love. You release your brothers from their burdens, and in so doing release yourself. You throw off the grip

of perverse attitudes and enter your Father's heavenly kingdom, where all worthwhile things reside. The liberty of spirit you experience in forgiving propels you where eye has not seen, nor ear heard; all that your Father has prepared for those who love him

and dare follow his gracious bidding. *Heaven and earth are yours, gracious Father. Help us this day to set our affairs in order, that we may be free to pursue yours. Give us the courage to do your will, this very day.*

References from The Urantia Book:

"I say to you: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. And whatsoever you believe that I would do to men, do you also to them.

"Your Father in heaven makes the sun to shine on the evil as well as upon the good; likewise he sends rain on the just and the unjust. You are the sons of God; even more, you are now the ambassadors of my Father's kingdom. Be merciful, even as God is merciful, and in the eternal future of the kingdom you shall be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect.

"You are commissioned to save men, not to judge them. At the end of your earth life you will all expect mercy; therefore do I require of you during your mortal life that you show mercy to all of your brethren in the flesh." 140:3.15-17

By showing mercy, he meant to portray spiritual deliverance from all grudges, grievances, anger, and the lust for selfish power and revenge. And when he said, "Resist not evil," he later explained that he did not mean to condone sin or to counsel fraternity with iniquity. He intended the more to teach forgiveness, to "resist not evil treatment of one's personality, evil injury to one's feelings of personal dignity." 141:3.8

Even the forgiveness of sin operates in this same unerring fashion. The Father in heaven has forgiven you even before you have thought to ask him, but such forgiveness is not available in your personal religious experience until such a time as you forgive your fellow men. 146:2.4

"Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Until seven times?" And Jesus answered Peter: "Not only seven times but even to seventy times and seven. Therefore may the kingdom of heaven be likened to a certain king who ordered a financial reckoning with his stewards. And when they had begun to conduct this examination of accounts, one of his chief retainers was brought before him confessing that he owed his king ten thousand talents. Now this officer of the king's court pleaded that hard times had come upon him, and that he did not have wherewith to pay this obligation. And so the king commanded that his property be confiscated, and that his children be sold to pay his debt. When this chief steward heard this stern decree, he fell down on his face before the king and implored him to have mercy and grant him more time, saying, 'Lord, have a little more patience with me, and I will pay you all.' And when the king looked upon this negligent servant and his family, he was moved with compassion. He ordered that he should be released, and that the loan should be wholly forgiven.

"And this chief steward, having thus received mercy and forgiveness at the hands of the king, went about his business, and finding one of his subordinate stewards who owed him a mere hundred denarii, he laid hold upon him and, taking him by the throat, said, 'Pay me all you owe.' And then did this fellow steward fall down before the chief steward and, beseeching him, said: 'Only have patience with me, and I will presently be able to pay you.' But the chief steward would not show mercy to his fellow steward but rather had him cast in

prison until he should pay his debt. When his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were so distressed that they went and told their lord and master, the king. When the king heard of the doings of his chief steward, he called this ungrateful and unforgiving man before him and said: ‘You are a wicked and unworthy steward. When you sought for compassion, I freely forgave you your entire debt. Why did you not also show mercy to your fellow steward, even as I showed mercy to you?’ And the king was so very angry that he delivered his ungrateful chief steward to the jailers that they might hold him until he had paid all that was due. And even so shall my heavenly Father show the more abundant mercy to those who freely show mercy to their fellows. How can you come to God asking consideration for your shortcomings when you are wont to chastise your brethren for being guilty of these same human frailties? I say to all of you: Freely you have received the good things of the kingdom; therefore freely give to your fellows on earth.” 159:1.4&5

Jesus taught that sin is not the child of a defective nature but rather the offspring of a knowing mind dominated by an unsubmitive will. Regarding sin, he taught that God *has* forgiven; that you make such forgiveness personally available by the act of forgiving your fellows. When you forgive your brother in the flesh, you thereby create the capacity in your own soul for the reception of the reality of God’s forgiveness of your own misdeeds. 170:2.19

“When a wise man understands the inner impulses of his fellows, he will love them. And when you love your brother, you have already forgiven him. This capacity to understand man’s nature and forgive his apparent wrongdoing is Godlike.

“Your inability or unwillingness to forgive your fellows is the measure of your immaturity, your failure to attain adult sympathy, understanding, and love. You hold grudges and nurse vengefulness in direct proportion to your ignorance of the inner nature and true longings of your children and your fellow beings. Love is the outworking of the divine and inner urge of life.” 174:1.4&5

STEP 6: ASK OTHERS' FORGIVENESS

Without consideration of the emotional or financial cost involved, ask forgiveness of all those you have wronged and do your best to make full amends to each of them, except where to do so might further injure them.

Only seldom is it enough to admit to a trusted friend or counselor, or even to God himself, that you have harmed someone, and stop there. Almost always, you must approach the person you wronged, acknowledge what you did, tell him how sorry you are, and try to set the situation right—return him to his prior position. Unless you rectify the situation to the extent of your power to do so, you deceive yourself in imagining your repentance to be genuine.

To ask God's forgiveness and stop there is to ignore the very real consequences of your regrettable actions—the stolen money, the malicious injury to another's reputation, whatever harm you caused. This material world exists in an unbroken continuum with the spiritual world; therefore, your actions must validate the spiritual estate to which you aspire. Your heavenly profession is less than sincere if you neglect or avoid your earthly obligations to the brothers and sisters you have harmed.

Expressing your sorrow may become more awkward as the event recedes in time and memory, yet the necessity to do so is undiminished. Asking forgiveness is a humbling act, an acknowledgment that you were weak, fallible, mean-spirited, or thoughtless. Asking forgiveness clears your conscience before God, removes an obstacle to the inner peace you seek, and restores your relationship with the person you wronged.

Whether the individual you harmed will accept your apology is beyond your control. God does not require that you repeatedly plead for your apology to be accepted, only that you sincerely ask forgiveness and attempt to make amends. Beyond that, nothing more can be done.

In making amends you should give every benefit of doubt to the person you harmed. For example, if you deprived someone of money rightfully his, fairness requires its return with interest, and if it is impossible to give the money back right away, you should make regular payments, not based on your convenience, but consisting of all that becomes available, holding back only what is necessary to maintain yourself in order to complete the repayment.

In some situations, however, apologizing and making amends is likely to only worsen matters. A husband or wife confessing to infidelity might sear his spouse's memory with images which render continuance in the marriage difficult or impossible, and where felonies have been committed, legal counsel may be appropriate. With God's help, however, all such wrongs can be dealt with in a fair and fitting way, one which will produce the greatest good and spiritual freedom, regardless of the earthly consequences which normally follow in the train of unfortunate actions.

The spiritual effort involved in making amends never fails to produce immediate rewards. As you shuck off old fears, exhaustively confront, and finally disown and forget the evils of your past, hitherto unknown liberty sweeps down from above. The fetters

of past sin lose their hold and you become spiritually and emotionally free from all that has bound you and are able to move confidently into the future. Past mistakes cease to threaten you, because they no longer pertain to your real self, only what you used to be. God transforms you; your pasts are laid to rest as you move boldly into your new life in the kingdom.

You have shown your dedication to the kingdom by making things right with all those you harmed. The more doing so has cost you

money you could ill afford or cracked the brittle veneer of a fictitious reputation, the more you have proven the depth of your commitment to the new life to which God has called you and your determination to let nothing stand between you and the spirit Father. Life in the kingdom cannot be priced with money. The Master asked: “What would a man give in exchange for his soul?” In making amends, you are guided by higher and universal Law, and in the process you experience a deeper relationship with God, who makes all things new.

References from The Urantia Book:

But Cain knew that, since he bore no tribal mark, he would be killed by the first neighboring tribesmen who might chance to meet him. Fear, and some remorse, led him to repent. Cain had never been indwelt by an Adjuster, had always been defiant of the family discipline and disdainful of his father’s religion. But he now went to Eve, his mother, and asked for spiritual help and guidance, and when he honestly sought divine assistance, an Adjuster indwelt him. 76:2.8

“We crave forgiveness from the Lord for all of our trespasses against our fellows; and we would release our friend from the wrong he has done us.” 131:4.5

“When you find yourself in the wrong, do not hesitate to confess your error and be quick to make amends.” 131:9.3

“No mortal who knows God and seeks to do the divine will can stoop to engage in the oppressions of wealth. . . . All such wealth should be restored to those who have thus been robbed or to their children and their children’s children.” 132:5.8

“If any portion of your fortune has been knowingly derived from fraud; if aught of your wealth has been accumulated by dishonest practices or unfair methods; if your riches are the product of unjust dealings with your fellows, make haste to restore all these ill-gotten gains to the rightful owners. Make full amends and thus cleanse your fortune of all dishonest riches.” 132:5.12

“And whatever it shall cost you in the things of the world, no matter what price you may pay to enter the kingdom of heaven, you shall receive manifold more of joy and spiritual progress in this world, and in the age to come eternal life.” 137:8.14

“And after they had thus met, the son looked up into his father’s tearful face and said: ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called a son’—but the lad did not find opportunity to complete his confession because the overjoyed father said to the servants who had by this time come running up: ‘Bring quickly his best robe, the one I saved, and put it on him and put the son’s ring on his hand and fetch sandals for his feet.’” 169:1.9

Then Zaccheus stood upon a stool and said: “Men of Jericho, hear me! I may be a publican and a sinner, but the great Teacher has come to abide in my house; and before he goes in, I tell you that I am going to bestow one half of all my goods upon the poor, and beginning tomorrow, if I have wrongfully exacted aught from any man, I will restore fourfold. I am going to seek salvation with all my heart and learn to do righteousness in the sight of God.” 171:6.2

“You should learn that the expression of even a good thought must be modulated in accordance with the intellectual status and spiritual development of the hearer.” 181:2.21

STEP 7: ACCEPT GOD'S FORGIVENESS

Accept the fullness of God's forgiveness and his spiritual eradication of all your misdeeds and shortcomings.

Once you have confronted your mistakes and misdeeds, confessed them to God and to a trusted friend, forgiven all who have wronged you, asked forgiveness of those you have wronged, and made your amends, you are entitled to experience the fullness of God's forgiveness and confidently take your place in the Father's universal family. With God's help, you have faced down your fears, disowned false pride by acknowledging before another what you have done, apologized to those you harmed, and to the best of your ability, set right the mistakes of your past.

Now comes a crucial act of faith: you must hand over all of these matters to your Father, and allow him to remove even their memory. You have dealt with these past mistakes to the best of your ability and are entitled to be free of their dead weight. You must now cease any further consideration of these errors, leaving them abandoned and forgotten while you move forward into the future God has prepared for you. Bad memories become unreal as nightmares upon awakening as God heals your soul. You have shown mercy to those who have wronged you; do not imagine that your Father will be less merciful towards you. The Father understood you from the beginning, your errors and how you came to make them; he looked upon your frailties with a parent's merciful eye. God forgave your mistakes even before you asked, because his forgiveness was not conditioned on anything you did, but existed naturally as a parent's love. God had already forgiven, even though

your experience of that forgiveness was unavailable until you had forgiven, asked forgiveness, and made amends.

Accepting God's forgiveness requires you to turn over to him every aspect of your past mistakes. To wallow further in past errors would only pull you down into a degenerative, self-defeating cycle of guilt and self-accusation. It is over; God has forgiven; the new life beckons beyond the hill.

The forgiveness steps free you from the past's hold; you can move on unencumbered into your new life in the spirit. Your amends were not acts of contrition, as if a stern God required you to go through ritual penance, but were undertaken because they were the right, proper, and responsible response to the situation of your creation. The Father only wanted you to be humbled that you might thereby become free. The mistakes of your past, beyond your power to undo, are receding into the dimness of oblivion as forgiveness dilutes and destroys any residual power they yet hold over you in the present.

You are throwing off every chain of destructive behavior and learning more deeply to do the Father's will. You find the Father in the renewed smile of a once-estranged friend and feel the warmth which results from being in tune with the universe—your universe. You are at peace with all that has gone before, even the wrongs, and trust that God will bring good out of every one of these unfortunate episodes. You have experienced the truth and could never turn back to sin. Now you can live your new life with enthusiasm and power.

References from The Urantia Book:

God is divinely kind to sinners. When rebels return to righteousness, they are mercifully received, “for your God will abundantly pardon.” “I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.” 2:5.4

The forgiveness of sin by Deity is the renewal of loyalty relations following a period of the human consciousness of the lapse of such relations as the consequence of conscious rebellion. The forgiveness does not have to be sought, only received as the consciousness of re-establishment of loyalty relations between the creature and the Creator. 89:10.6

“Every one who is called by my name I have created for my glory, and they shall show forth my praise. I, even I, am he who blots out their transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember their sins.” 97:7.10

“‘Come now, let you reason together,’ says the Lord, ‘Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’” 131:2.10

“Let the wicked forsake his evil way and the unrighteous man his rebellious thoughts. Says the Lord: ‘Let them return to me, and I will have mercy on them; I will abundantly pardon.’” 131:2.11

“And this is the sum of duty: Let no man do to another what would be repugnant to himself; cherish no malice, smite not him who smites you, conquer anger with mercy, and vanquish hate by benevolence. And all this you should do because God is a kind friend and a gracious father who remits all your earthly offenses.” 131:4.6

“This religion of the Wise One cleanses the believer from every evil thought and sinful deed. I bow before the God of heaven in repentance if I have offended in thought, word, or act—intentionally or unintentionally—and I offer prayers for mercy and praise for forgiveness. I know when I make confession, if I purpose not to do again the evil thing, that sin will be removed from my soul. I know that forgiveness takes away the bonds of sin.” 131:5.5

“When men and women ask what shall you do to be saved, you shall answer, Believe this gospel of the kingdom; accept divine forgiveness.” 150:5.2

“I admonish you to fear none, in heaven or on earth, but to rejoice in the knowledge of him who has power to deliver you from all unrighteousness and to present you blameless before the judgment seat of a universe.” 165:3.3

“Divine forgiveness is inevitable; it is inherent and inalienable in God’s infinite understanding, in his perfect knowledge of all that concerns the mistaken judgment and erroneous choosing of the child.” 174:1.3

The cross forever shows that the attitude of Jesus toward sinners was neither condemnation nor condonation,

but rather eternal and loving salvation. Jesus is truly a savior in the sense that his life and death do win men over to goodness and righteous survival. Jesus loves men so much that his love awakens the response of love in the human heart. Love is truly contagious and eternally creative. Jesus' death on the cross exemplifies a love which is sufficiently strong and divine to forgive sin and swallow up all evil-doing. Jesus disclosed to this world a higher quality of righteousness than justice—mere technical right and wrong.

Divine love does not merely forgive wrongs; it absorbs and actually destroys them. The forgiveness of love utterly transcends the forgiveness of mercy. Mercy sets the guilt of evil-doing to one side; but love destroys forever the sin and all weakness resulting therefrom. Jesus brought a new method of living to Urantia. He taught you not to resist evil but to find through him a goodness which effectually destroys evil. The forgiveness of Jesus is not condonation; it is salvation from condemnation.

Salvation does not slight wrongs; it *makes them right*. True love does not compromise nor condone hate; it destroys it. The love of Jesus is never satisfied with mere forgiveness. The Master's love implies rehabilitation, eternal survival. It is altogether proper to speak of salvation as redemption if you mean this eternal rehabilitation.

Jesus, by the power of his personal love for men, could break the hold of sin and evil. He thereby set men free to choose better ways of living. Jesus portrayed a deliverance from the past which in itself promised a triumph for the future. Forgiveness thus provided salvation. The beauty of divine love, once fully admitted to the human heart, forever destroys the charm of sin and the power of evil. 188:5.2&3

STEP 8: LIVE A NEW LIFE

Live a new life, abandoning anger, anxiety, impatience, pride, and fear, refusing to cling to or nurture these relics of your past. Promptly admit your wrongs and refuse to harbor feelings of guilt.

In every heart there is a kingdom which the believer is called to enter. It is a kingdom of peace, joy, love, and unfathomable freedom. This kingdom has always been there, but few have trusted enough to enter, despite the still, small voice whispering from within, telling you of the Father's love. To those who live for his purposes and rejoice in his love, God's kingdom is a river which washes souls clean and makes hearts whole. This river, foretold by the prophets and confirmed by the saints, courses down through the ages and across the universes and is intended to flow through your heart as well.

The kingdom is not just a state of mind; it is also a real place. What if a sick and homeless man, alone in a strange city on an icy day, the bitter wind ripping through his torn and greasy overcoat, found that he could be transported instantly to the tropical island of his dreams and sit barefoot on the sand beside someone he loved, listening to the surf gently ruffle the shell-strewn beach? In fact, your Father enables you to continually experience even a greater paradise within—the personal peace and happiness you crave—as you go about your normal business of life.

Think how much more effective you will be when you consistently operate out of this kingdom: your spirit an unassailable citadel; your communication with others thoughtful, creative, and encouraging; your mind at peace, no longer troubled by emotional crosscurrents

or torn by contradictory goals and purposes; your body healthier; your life simpler and more effective.

In this new life you have found freedom from the curse of guilt because you asked for and experienced forgiveness for every error of your past; all that has been turned over to your Father, and you have made peace with your fellows. You live and act with the confidence of men and women who know why they are here, what they are doing, and where they are going. Barriers no longer seem insurmountable. Obstacles become interesting features in life's landscape. Your heart overflows with the love of the Sovereign of the universes who directs your ways.

Self-interest largely motivated your old life. As your dedication to higher values strengthened, you tried to become a better person. But you failed because you attempted to improve yourself using unaided willpower. This effort to change yourself was frustrating, exhausting, and ultimately unsuccessful, because your ego was no more capable of transforming itself than water can turn itself to wine. Only by submitting yourself to a Higher Power can you legitimately expect transformation, for God is pleased to do for you what you yourself cannot. Faith opens the door to your inner self, nourishes you with true spiritual forces, and aligns you with the ascending currents of the universe.

This new life is different, not just a variation on what you've known before, but something altogether new. A high-jumper raises his pole clearance by patient training, every slight improvement requiring hard work. The life in the kingdom is not like that,

being instead a realm of inner peace, joy, beauty, and productivity which cannot be attained by character building or positive thinking, even if those techniques be otherwise valuable. The kingdom of heaven is where you have always wanted to live, and where, by faith, you can go this very hour. It is the place dreamed of by the prophets and sought after by all who love God. In the kingdom, God's spirit is your daily companion as you live, love, and achieve through the power which flows down from the Source of eternal love on Paradise.

The kingdom of heaven takes you beyond the clinging vines of your past which have tied your soul to earth with their accusations of guilt and sin. The past has forever lost its power over you, because you know the Father has forgiven your missteps and mistakes. You have a fresh start, and nothing but your own fearfulness and doubt can hold you back now.

This new life does not deliver you from future shortcomings but reveals a process whereby such mistakes can be abbreviated and transcended. The new life makes righteous living a joy instead of a burden, because you live under God's guidance and share every hour with him. As the Father directs his river of love toward your heart, the faith it inspires sweeps away every blockage of selfishness and doubt. You live in your Father's world and

know yourself to be his child.

You gain this new life through surrender to God's transforming power and by your commitment to live according to what you know is true, best, and right. You disown every hindrance and move forward with confidence in God's will as he reveals it. You have the power to follow your Father's will, and you will succeed in so doing.

With God's help you are bigger than the things which have held you back, those pet evils that seemed so addictive you doubted your ability to shake free. Their surface attractiveness no longer allures now that you have learned of the better way. In family difficulties, personal dissatisfaction, and emotional anguish, the cost of remaining outside the Father's kingdom is too high. The fetters of fear and doubt which tether you like an animal melt away, evaporating before the rays of your Father's love. You no longer doubt the kingdom or weigh the pluses and minuses of its relative costs and benefits. You are wholeheartedly entering that which has always been available, but which only recently became real to you.

You anticipate every arriving hour in the Father's kingdom, knowing not what it will bring, only that the Father will make it good. All things are becoming new.

References from The Urantia Book:

You must surrender every wish of mind and every craving of soul to the transforming embrace of spiritual growth. 91:9.4

Of all the dangers which beset man's mortal nature and jeopardize his spiritual integrity, pride is the greatest. Courage is valorous, but egotism is vainglorious and suicidal.

Pride is deceitful, intoxicating, and sin-breeding whether found in an individual, a group, a race, or a nation. It is literally true, "Pride goes before a fall." 111:6.9&10

“Be reminded that a wise tailor does not sew a piece of new and unshrunk cloth upon an old garment, lest, when it is wet, it shrink and produce a worse rent. Neither do men put new wine into old wine skins, lest the new wine burst the skins so that both the wine and the skins perish. The wise man puts the new wine into fresh wine skins. Therefore do my disciples show wisdom in that they do not bring too much of the old order over into the new teaching of the gospel of the kingdom.” 147:7.2

Jesus fully understood how difficult it is for men to break with their past. He knew how human beings are swayed by the preacher’s eloquence, and how the conscience responds to emotional appeal as the mind does to logic and reason, but he also knew how far more difficult it is to persuade men to *disown the past*. 154:6.8

The theme of Jesus’ instructions during the sojourn at Sidon was spiritual progression. He told them they could not stand still; they must go forward in righteousness or retrogress into evil and sin. He admonished them to “forget those things which are in the past while you push forward to embrace the greater realities of the kingdom.” . . .

Said Jesus: “My disciples must not only cease to do evil but learn to do well; you must not only be cleansed from all conscious sin, but you must refuse to harbor even the feelings of guilt. If you confess your sins, they are forgiven; therefore must you maintain a conscience void of offense.” 156:2.6&7

“But whosoever causes one of these little ones to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were cast into the sea. If the things you do with your hands, or the things you see with your eyes give offense in the progress of the kingdom, sacrifice these cherished idols, for it is better to enter the kingdom minus many of the beloved things of life rather than to cling to these idols and find yourself shut out of the kingdom.” 158:8.1

I see in the teachings of Jesus, religion at its best. This gospel enables you to seek for the true God and to find him. But are you willing to pay the price of this entrance into the kingdom of heaven? Are you willing to be born again? to be remade? Are you willing to be subject to this terrible and testing process of self-destruction and soul reconstruction? Has not the Master said: “Whoso would save his life must lose it. Think not that I have come to bring peace but rather a soul struggle”? True, after you pay the price of dedication to the Father’s will, you do experience great peace provided you continue to walk in these spiritual paths of consecrated living.

Now are you truly forsaking the lures of the known order of existence while you unreservedly dedicate your quest to the lures of the unknown and unexplored order of the existence of a future life of adventure in the spirit worlds of the higher idealism of divine reality. 160:5.10&11

STEP 9: COMMIT YOURSELF

Determine that the only life worth living is one based on truth and dedicated to your loving heavenly Father. Wholeheartedly commit every aspect of your life to God and to doing his will.

Primitive man's native belligerence, suspicion, and cunning kept him alive in a hostile world, and these instincts of self-preservation still serve you, but the complicated spiritual progress because you are programmed down deep *not* to trust. But to enter the kingdom, that is exactly what you must do.

Life in the spirit is an evolving relationship of willing communication between your soul and its Maker. Attentive to God's spirit, commit yourself in advance to do whatever God wants you to do, instantly and exactly, regardless of the cost or apparent consequences. Kingdom progress is a subjective and subtle process, and preset formulas for its achievement may deceive some who misunderstand its inner spirit, possibly even inoculating them against the real thing. Life in the kingdom is a process of liberation which requires that you wholeheartedly and unreservedly enter a narrow and demanding way, certain that on the far shore you will find peace, joy, and eternal life.

Entering the kingdom requires you to lay aside every thing, activity, or relationship which stands between yourself and the divine life. If your commitment to God is other than unconditional, if you hold back even a little, your spiritual commitment is partial because *you* remain in charge. If you obey your Father ninety-nine times out of one hundred, you are holding back from unquestioning obedience,

because each new situation requires a fresh calculation as to whether or not, this time, you will follow the divine leading.

Outward behavior notwithstanding, there is little spiritual difference between obeying God ninety-nine percent of the time and one percent of the time, the difference being merely of degree. Only in the lives of those who have decided, in advance, to follow his will no matter what the cost or consequences, can the Father express himself fully.

What if you could live that way, even for an hour; if problems which have burdened you for years could suddenly fall away, never to return? If you could see the angels who walk beside you, supporting you in each of life's battles; if you could be absolutely certain that the events of your daily lives were part of a far-reaching plan designed by an all-wise Being?

What sets all this in motion? From the place you now find yourself, how can you enter this marvelous kingdom? Trying to find God, ascetics have mortified their flesh: have sat in cold water, climbed mountains, and endured the harshest deprivation and suffering in the hope of gaining the favor of a stern, withdrawn God. Attempting to reduce those distractions which are a natural part of the world God created for you to live in, monks have maintained years of strict silence or filled their days reciting set prayers until their tongues move hypnotized by monotonous repetition.

Others vainly seek to control the secrets of the universe and attain the heavenly estate by learning more *about* the Universal Upholder, seeking to find God by knowledge. But mere

knowledge does not bring souls into the kingdom. Rather is it life lived by faith in vigorous contact with the world God has given you that matures your spiritual potentials. We seek the kingdom, not to bend the world to our bidding, but through faith to become effective instruments in doing our heavenly Father's will.

If this prize is worth the price, don't hesitate; go off by yourself and talk with the Father. Tell him what you want in life, your longings and hopes, as well as your problems and fears. Summon the courage to tell him that from this time on you want to live his way, no matter what the apparent cost in the things and relationships of this world. Tell the Father that you trust him totally, that your life is his, and that your deepest desire is to obey him in even

the smallest matters. Then remain in silence and listen for his response to your soul, his welcome into the spiritual kingdom.

The Father bleaches out the stains which blemish your inner self, making clean your heart. As God lives in and through you, you become more effective and less subject to normal human constraints; as agents of him who controls the circumstances of the whirling worlds of space, you accomplish more. In working with God, God works through you. Entering this mysterious kingdom brightens the hues and shades of the world around you; the leaves on every oak seem to vibrate with thankfulness for the gift of life. You sense the limitless adventure God stretches before you, your small part of his never-ending story of mercy and provision.

References from The Urantia Book:

Even to approach the knowing of a divine personality, all of man's personality endowments must be wholly consecrated to the effort; halfhearted, partial devotion will be unavailing. 1:6.5

To isolate part of life and call it religion is to disintegrate life and to distort religion. And this is just why the God of worship claims all allegiance or none. 102:6.1

The secret of survival is wrapped up in the supreme human desire to be Godlike and in the associated willingness to do and be any and all things which are essential to the final attainment of that overmastering desire. 110:3.2

When man consecrates his will to the doing of the Father's will, when man gives God all that he *has*, then does God make that man more than he is. 117:4.14

That which the lad wanted most to do he was unconsciously actually doing. And it was, and is, ever thus. That which the enlightened and reflective human imagination of spiritual teaching and leading wholeheartedly and unselfishly wants to do and be, becomes measurably creative in accordance with the degree of mortal dedication to the divine doing of the Father's will. When man goes in partnership with God, great things may, and do, happen. 132:7.9

"Those who first seek to enter the kingdom, thus beginning to strive for a nobility of character like that of my Father, shall presently possess all else that is needful. But I say to you in all sincerity: Unless you seek

entrance into the kingdom with the faith and trusting dependence of a little child, you shall in no wise gain admission.” 137:8.8

The right to enter the kingdom is conditioned by faith, personal belief. The cost of remaining in the progressive ascent of the kingdom is the pearl of great price, in order to possess which a man sells all that he has. 140:8.28

“The heathen strike directly for their objectives; you are guilty of too much chronic yearning. If you desire to enter the kingdom, why do you not take it by spiritual assault even as the heathen take a city they lay siege to? You are hardly worthy of the kingdom when your service consists so largely in an attitude of regretting the past, whining over the present, and vainly hoping for the future.” 155:1.3

Almost every human being has some one thing which is held on to as a pet evil, and which the entrance into the kingdom of heaven requires as a part of the price of admission. 163:2.7

“But the Father requires that the affections of his children be pure and undivided. Whatever thing or person comes between you and the love of the truths of the kingdom, must be surrendered.” 163:3.3

Jesus taught that, by faith, the believer enters the kingdom *now*. In the various discourses he taught that two things are essential to faith-entrance into the kingdom:

1. *Faith, sincerity*. To come as a little child, to receive the bestowal of sonship as a gift; to submit to the doing of the Father’s will without questioning and in the full confidence and genuine trustfulness of the Father’s wisdom; to come into the kingdom free from prejudice and preconception; to be open-minded and teachable like an unspoiled child.

2. *Truth hunger*. The thirst for righteousness, a change of mind, the acquirement of the motive to be like God and to find God. 170:2.18

“You who would follow after me from this time on, must be willing to pay the price of wholehearted dedication to the doing of my Father’s will. If you would be my disciples, you must be willing to forsake father, mother, wife, children, brothers, and sisters. If any one of you would now be my disciple, you must be willing to give up even your life just as the Son of Man is about to offer up his life for the completion of the mission of doing the Father’s will on earth and in the flesh.” 171:2.2

“Now, then, must each of you sit down and count the cost of being my disciple. From now on you will not be able to follow after you, listening to the teaching and beholding the works; you will be required to face bitter persecutions and to bear witness for this gospel in the face of crushing disappointment. If you are unwilling to renounce all that you are and to dedicate all that you have, then are you unworthy to be my disciple.” 171:2.4

STEP 10: PRAY

Through prayer, meditation, worship, and spiritual communion improve your conscious contact with God and share your inner life with him.

Committing your life to God is the spiritual foundation for prayer, the process by which you come to know your heavenly Father.

God, being God, can communicate with you any way he chooses. If he rarely does so audibly, it is due to the importance he attaches to your growth in faith. If seeking spiritual guidance consisted of no more than listening to a voice or consulting handwriting on a chalkboard, what point would there be to living by faith? God's plan requires that you rely on your highest convictions when the way is unclear. Wrestling with the uncertainties of inner guidance exercises your faith. A parent is less concerned with whether his child understands a particular passage than with whether the child is learning to read; similarly, the important thing in God's sight is not whether you perfectly understand a particular answer to prayer, but the process of growth associated with seeking his will. The latter pertains to your relationship with him; the former addresses only details.

The vital thing is that you listen to the Father's still, small voice within your soul, a practice which requires concentration to catch the delicate tones to which your material ears are altogether deaf. The soul has this faculty naturally, but it requires persistence to enable you to separate God's leading from the cacophony of your own randomly arising thoughts, just as it requires practice for an outdoorsman to separate the songs of individual birds from the background noises of the forest. The Father has much to tell you, and

your spiritual well being depends on taking the time to listen.

Prayer cannot be learned from books, only by experience. Prayer is communication with one's maker, not a rhetorical skill whereby your flowery language supposedly impresses him whose mind encompasses the galaxies. The time, place, and form of your prayers are not significant, only their sincerity and your willingness to listen for God's answers. You become friends with your Father in heaven the same way you do with anyone else, by spending time with him—talking, listening, and sharing your life.

You share with God those daily matters which occupy your mind, for anything you are concerned about, he is as well. But your prayers should not degenerate into a continuous selfish whining over personal problems; you should not neglect the needs of others, which usually far surpass your own. Also, your prayers must never devolve into requests that God make your life easier, or give you preference over others. To place your own difficulties in truer perspective, you must cultivate an attitude of gratefulness and appreciation, remembering to thank the Father for the good things he gives you each day.

Your prayer life connects you with the real spirit world, equipping you to face your challenges and difficulties as they actually exist, not as you might wish them to be in some dream world of unreality. When you have problems, prayer leads you to examine the exact position in which you find yourself, how it came to be that you are in such a fix, and where you will likely end up, unless you do something to change the dynamics of the situation.

Prayer is a stimulus for action, not a substitute. The Father put you on this world to participate in life and build strong character through overcoming its inevitable vicissitudes. That purpose would be defeated and indolence rewarded were God to grant your requests for things which are within your human ability to achieve, obtain, or attain. God designed this world so that effort is required to attain goals, and while you always ask the Father for strength to accomplish your goals, you should never expect him to do for you what he has already given you power to accomplish.

For your prayers to be effective, they should be focused and specific. Exactly how do you want the situation to turn out? Usually, just thinking that question through discloses the obvious answer and permits you to redirect your human energies to its realization. Your overall attitude toward life is, "Father, your will be done," but in prayer, generalities dissipate like water poured from a bucket. Having thought the situation through to the best of your ability and arrived at a sincere belief as to the best outcome for all concerned, unhesitatingly ask the Father to help you bring it about.

Your faith attitude takes for granted that God will solve the problem in the very best way, whether or not it is by means of any alternative you have foreseen. But good prayer results don't come from wishy-washy, vague, or indefinite attitudes, because God desires you forcefully to attack, and creatively to solve, the problems of life. You should pray hard over your difficulties and work equally hard to overcome them. Your prayers are not hesitant, timid or mushy, but rather bold assertions of the triumph of what is right and best.

You come before God as to a good earthly

father, set out the exact situation or problem, explain your thought processes in arriving at the outcome or solution you envision as best, and recapitulate what you have done thus far to solve the problem. If there is nothing further you are able to do to improve the situation, you are entitled in complete confidence to ask God to bring about the result you are convinced is best.

If God appears not to have answered your prayers, it is not because he hasn't heard, doesn't care, or is too busy. An apparently unanswered prayer could signify several things: that you have not yet exhausted your human remedies to the problem; that, for reasons you do not understand, it would be harmful for you to receive that which you seek, at least in the way you envision; that answering your prayer would abridge another's free will; that the time is not yet ripe; or even, unbeknownst to you, that the prayer has already been answered. Except for these self-evident exceptions, you should live in the certainty that God answers every one of your prayers.

Prayer, faith, and action are spiritually bound together. Prayer generates faith, faith leads you to pray, and both lead you to act decisively according to your Father's leading. Acting on spiritual guidance in turn gives you more faith and upsteps your prayer life as you experience the satisfactions of a victorious spiritual life.

Prayer is real and should be used to overcome barriers the way ancient armies used battering rams to sunder the gates of enemy cities. Prayer, joined by faith and action, collapses intractable problems, surmounts difficulties, and brings the reign of God more fully to our troubled planet.

References from The Urantia Book:

If you would engage in effective praying, you should bear in mind the laws of prevailing petitions:

1. You must qualify as a potent prayer by sincerely and courageously facing the problems of universe reality. You must possess cosmic stamina.
2. You must have honestly exhausted the human capacity for human adjustment. You must have been industrious.
3. You must surrender every wish of mind and every craving of soul to the transforming embrace of spiritual growth. You must have experienced an enhancement of meanings and an elevation of values.
4. You must make a wholehearted choice of the divine will. You must obliterate the dead center of indecision.
5. You not only recognize the Father's will and choose to do it, but you have effected an unqualified consecration, and a dynamic dedication, to the actual doing of the Father's will.
6. Your prayer will be directed exclusively for divine wisdom to solve the specific human problems encountered in the Paradise ascension—the attainment of divine perfection.
7. And you must have faith—living faith. 91:9.1-8

The doing of the will of God is nothing more or less than an exhibition of creature willingness to share the inner life with God—with the very God who has made such a creature life of inner meaning-value possible. Sharing is Godlike—divine. 111:5.1

Worship is the act of a part identifying itself with the Whole; the finite with the Infinite; the son with the Father; time in the act of striking step with eternity. Worship is the act of the son's personal communion with the divine Father, the assumption of refreshing, creative, fraternal, and romantic attitudes by the human soul-spirit. 143:7.8

“But when you pray, you exercise so little faith. Genuine faith will remove mountains of material difficulty which may chance to lie in the path of soul expansion and spiritual progress.” 144:2.6

Jesus taught that effective prayer must be:

1. Unselfish—not alone for oneself.
2. Believing—according to faith.
3. Sincere—honest of heart.
4. Intelligent—according to light.
5. Trustful—in submission to the Father's all-wise will. 144:3.8

When you have become wholly dedicated to the doing of the will of the Father in heaven, the answer to all your petitions will be forthcoming because your prayers will be in full accordance with the Father's will, and the Father's will is ever manifest throughout his vast universe. What the true son desires and the infinite Father wills IS. Such a prayer cannot remain unanswered, and no other sort of petition can possibly be fully answered. 146:2.7

“I have come forth from the Father; if, therefore, you are ever in doubt as to what you would ask of the Father, ask in my name, and I will present your petition in accordance with your real needs and desires and in accordance with my Father’s will.” 146:2.10

Even the apostles were unable fully to comprehend his teaching as to the necessity for using spiritual force for the purpose of breaking through all material resistance and for surmounting every earthly obstacle which might chance to stand in the way of grasping the all-important spiritual values of the new life in the spirit as the liberated sons of God. 166:3.8

When a prayer is apparently unanswered, the delay often betokens a better answer, although one which is for some good reason greatly delayed. . . . No sincere prayer is denied an answer except when the superior viewpoint of the spiritual world has devised a better answer, an answer which meets the petition of the spirit of man as contrasted with the prayer of the mere mind of man. 168:4.5

How long will it take the world of believers to understand that prayer is not a process of getting your way but rather a program of taking God’s way, an experience of learning how to recognize and execute the Father’s will? It is entirely true that, when your will has been truly aligned with his, you can ask anything conceived by that will-union, and it will be granted. And such a will-union is effected by and through Jesus even as the life of the vine flows into and through the living branches.

STEP 11: BALANCE PHYSICAL WITH SPIRITUAL

Pass through conflict as God empowers you to exchange material for spiritual goals. Become better at balancing your human needs with your life in the spirit.

This step concerns the reconciliation of total inner commitment with the exigencies of daily existence, balancing what is good for you with what is good for others. Is it possible to live in this world and yet, as Jesus said, not be of this world? How can you act spiritually when you are every second hostage to flesh and blood? How can you resist experiencing anger, lust, greed, and selfishness when the survival instincts programmed into you by the Creator compel you to react that very way? Is the Master's selfless way compatible with life's practicalities? Your instinctual drives perpetuate the species and keep you alive in an often cruel world, but how do you reconcile these inborn urges with their opposites: Jesus' admonitions to give away your cloak, walk the second mile, and save your life by losing it?

In God's eyes you have rights as an individual; he does not intend that your fellows exercise a total claim on your time and energies. The Father created you as you are, and so long as you do not compromise your spiritual loyalties, he supports your desire for human success and fulfillment. God gave you your commonplace physical appetites and desires, and just as there is nothing wrong with water so long as one does not drown in it, nothing is inherently wrong or evil about any of your human urges, even if they must often be restrained out of higher ethical considerations.

The new life is lived on the same world as the old one, and spiritual seekers do not

escape making the manifold daily adjustments which life requires. If you ignored your own welfare, without a keeper you would quickly die of starvation or exposure. If you continue to live solely for yourself as you did in the old life, what difference has your rebirth made? As a spiritually newborn son or daughter you should take neither extreme, but rather be guided by your God-given attributes of common sense and balance. God does not require or expect you to ignore your personal welfare; his desire is that you unselfishly *subordinate* your interests to the service of others, remembering that He knows your personal needs, and trust Him to supply them.

Your Father is well aware of the difficult transition you must pass through adapting to the new life in the spirit, and he will safely guide every soul committed to his keeping. God can balance the needs of your body with the desires of your soul and requires only your cooperation for the transition to be positive and productive.

Once inside the kingdom's gates the critical battle has been won, but only with common sense and balance do you avoid rear-guard actions from the emotional extremes of materialistic self-centeredness and fanatical, immature pseudo-spirituality. You should not be discouraged when the unwelcome guests of vengefulness, anger, lust, or jealousy insinuate their unwanted presence into your mind. Only time can erase some deep-seated mental poisons, but now that God's spirit is enthroned in your heart, you can be patient while he transforms you into his likeness. Delivery from emotional distress may or may not come quickly, but anxiety regarding the state of your soul only irritates the scab on the healing wound.

The spiritual world is real and important, and this physical world is real and important, offering as it does learning experiences you will never again encounter in your upward ascent through the many mansions of the Father's universe. Your body's need for food, shelter, and clothing is no less real than your soul's need for faith, hope, and love. You live out your ideals on the stage of this physical world which contains the intermeshed and often incongruously associated circumstances of people and things in which you find yourself. The insistent demands of this physical world provide an ongoing check of your spiritual intentions, preventing them

from becoming mere abstractions or fantasies. In this world you must compromise, balance, and reconcile the multiform competing forces and interests as best you can, and rarely will your triaged responses to these complex problems afford the satisfaction of a perfect solution. Perfection is your goal, but it is not attainable in this world. The Father takes all this into account, and you should not hinder his work in you by self-recrimination or thoughts of failure. Your ship has been launched onto the uncharted waters of an eternal career, and the Power which set the universe in motion can and will do for you what humanly would be impossible.

References from The Urantia Book:

Those God-knowing men and women who have been born of the Spirit experience no more conflict with their mortal natures than do the inhabitants of the most normal of worlds, planets which have never been tainted with sin nor touched by rebellion. Faith sons work on intellectual levels and live on spiritual planes far above the conflicts produced by unrestrained or unnatural physical desires. The normal urges of animal beings and the natural appetites and impulses of the physical nature are not in conflict with even the highest spiritual attainment except in the minds of ignorant, mistaught, or unfortunately overconscientious persons. Having started out on the way of life everlasting, having accepted the assignment and received your orders to advance, do not fear the dangers of human forgetfulness and mortal inconstancy, do not be troubled with doubts of failure or by perplexing confusion, do not falter and question your status and standing, for in every dark hour, at every crossroad in the forward struggle, the Spirit of Truth will always speak, saying, "This is the way." 34:7.7&8

When it comes to the sharp and well-defined conflicts between the higher and lower tendencies of the races, between what *really is* right or wrong (not merely what you may call right and wrong), you can depend upon it that the Adjuster will always participate in some definite and active manner in such experiences. The fact that such Adjuster activity may be unconscious to the human partner does not in the least detract from its value and reality. 108:5.9

The great problem of life is the adjustment of the ancestral tendencies of living to the demands of the spiritual urges initiated by the divine presence of the Mystery Monitor. While in the universe and superuniverse careers no man can serve two masters, in the life you now live on Urantia every man must perforce serve two masters. He must become adept in the art of a continuous human temporal compromise while he yields spiritual allegiance to but one master; and this is why so many falter and fail, grow weary and succumb to the stress of the evolutionary struggle. 109:5.4

The human mind does not well stand the conflict of double allegiance. It is a severe strain on the soul to undergo the experience of an effort to serve both good and evil. The supremely happy and efficiently unified mind is the one wholly dedicated to the doing of the will of the Father in heaven. Unresolved conflicts destroy unity and may terminate in mind disruption. But the survival character of a soul is not fostered by attempting to secure peace of mind at any price, by the surrender of noble aspirations, and by the compromise of spiritual ideals; rather is such

peace attained by the stalwart assertion of the triumph of that which is true, and this victory is achieved in the overcoming of evil with the potent force of good. 133:7.12

“While you will experience great joy in the service of my Father, you should also be prepared for trouble, for I warn you that it will be only through much tribulation that many will enter the kingdom. But those who have found the kingdom, their joy will be full, and they shall be called the blest of all the earth.” 137:6.5

It requires time for men and women to effect radical and extensive changes in their basic and fundamental concepts of social conduct, philosophic attitudes, and religious convictions. 152:6.1

“You know that men are all too often led into temptation by the urge of their own selfishness and by the impulses of their animal natures. When you are in this way tempted, I admonish you that, while you recognize temptation honestly and sincerely for just what it is, you intelligently redirect the energies of spirit, mind, and body, which are seeking expression, into higher channels and toward more idealistic goals. In this way may you transform your temptations into the highest types of uplifting mortal ministry while you almost wholly avoid these wasteful and weakening conflicts between the animal and spiritual natures.” 156:5.4

Forewarn all believers regarding the fringe of conflict which must be traversed by all who pass from the life as it is lived in the flesh to the higher life as it is lived in the spirit. To those who live quite wholly within either realm, there is little conflict or confusion, but all are doomed to experience more or less uncertainty during the times of transition between the two levels of living. In entering the kingdom, you cannot escape its responsibilities or avoid its obligations, but remember: The gospel yoke is easy and the burden of truth is light. 159:3.7

Teach all believers that those who enter the kingdom are not thereby rendered immune to the accidents of time or to the ordinary catastrophes of nature. Believing the gospel will not prevent getting into trouble, but it will insure that you shall be *unafraid* when trouble does overtake you. If you dare to believe in me and wholeheartedly proceed to follow after me, you shall most certainly by so doing enter upon the sure pathway to trouble. I do not promise to deliver you from the waters of adversity, but I do promise to go with you through all of them. 159:3.13

STEP 12: PERSIST IN YOUR SEARCH

Persist in your search and trust in God's schedule for your spiritual enlightenment. Seek the wisdom to know and the patience to wait on God's will in all things.

Ecclesiastes tells us that for every thing there is a season. Apples do not ripen after the first frost because you want them to, but because their time has come. Where others are concerned, what you want only rarely happens according to the schedule you desire, if at all. The consequences of your actions mock your control, affected as they are by unknowable factors beyond your horizon, and short-term failures and reversals allow you to grow in faith while you await the final outcome of events. Visible results may be long delayed or may never attend your actions, presenting you with situations in which the exercise of patience teaches you to do what is good and right for its own sake. If immediate recompense attended helping another, such service might become no more than selfish calculation, unacceptable to God, who requires that you serve others out of love, with no desire for, or expectation of, personal reward.

God has a perfect schedule for your spiritual enlightenment, and knowing all things, somehow weaves all of life's seemingly fortuitous circumstances, attitudes, and actions into personal tapestries of rich yet uniquely individual symmetries. The Father controls the interassociations of all circumstance and engenders your growth when the time is right. You might intensely desire an event to transpire, but your wishes have little or no bearing on whether it is divinely possible for the circumstances and personalities involved to conform themselves to your vision. The timing of events eludes

your fragile control; opportunities dart like fish from behind river boulders and never reappear, no matter how patiently you cast your line.

You should never expect to get everything you want right now, knowing that life simply doesn't work that way and that the fruit of impatience is frustration and bitterness. Daily living proves how often it is necessary to bear with disagreeable situations, even for extended periods. Faith teaches you likewise, but in addition, helps you understand the appropriateness of forbearance. Before, what patience you could summon arose out of the absence of a viable alternative; now, you see the greater good in waiting on God's schedule. The Father has given you new insight into the working of his universe, and you agree with its rightness.

Persistence is especially important in your prayers. Most of the problems about which you pray admit of no easy solution, but you must keep heart. You *will* receive answers, delayed, perhaps, because a better answer than any you had contemplated is in prospect. No matter what, you must hang on and never give up, maintaining unshakable confidence in your Father's good will and mercy and in his intention to give you the righteous desires of your heart.

Patience serves you well in every aspect of your life. You wait on God's word, recognizing that he is in charge, not you. Understanding that your life and career are secure in our Father's loving and all-powerful hands, you find emotional contentment and inner peace. You have abandoned the futile and frustrating exercise of trying to force events through the preconceived filter of your

personal expectations or trying to make others conform to your personal vision for their lives. Whatever the situation is, it simply is. Your duty is to work hard according to your sense of God's leading, accepting the world as it is and disowning every counterproductive temptation to project your favored outcomes onto the inexorable procession of effects following causes or the free-will actions of others.

persistence encompasses patience but further demands that you forcefully assert yourself toward accomplishing what you believe God would have you do, ignoring any possible resistance, never giving in. Nothing, absolutely nothing, can stop a soul wholly dedicated to the Father's will. Brush aside discouragement. Continue on, totally confident in the ultimate victory of righteousness in yourself and in the world.

Patience is a noble but passive trait. True

References from The Urantia Book:

To every spirit being and to every mortal creature in every sphere and on every world of the universe of universes, the Universal Father reveals all of his gracious and divine self that can be discerned or comprehended by such spirit beings and by such mortal creatures. 1:4.6

That, then, is the primary or elementary course which confronts the faith-tested and much-traveled pilgrims of space. But long before reaching Havona, these ascendant children of time have learned to feast upon uncertainty, to fatten upon disappointment, to enthuse over apparent defeat, to invigorate in the presence of difficulties, to exhibit indomitable courage in the face of immensity, and to exercise unconquerable faith when confronted with the challenge of the inexplicable. Long since, the battle cry of these pilgrims became: "In liaison with God, nothing—absolutely nothing—is impossible." 26:5.3

May I admonish you to heed the distant echo of the Adjuster's faithful call to your soul? The indwelling Adjuster cannot stop or even materially alter your career struggle of time; the Adjuster cannot lessen the hardships of life as you journey on through this world of toil. The divine indweller can only patiently forbear while you fight the battle of life as it is lived on your planet; but you could, if you only would—as you work and worry, as you fight and toil—permit the valiant Adjuster to fight with you and for you. You could be so comforted and inspired, so enthralled and intrigued, if you would only allow the Adjuster constantly to bring forth the pictures of the real motive, the final aim, and the eternal purpose of all this difficult, uphill struggle with the commonplace problems of your present material world. 111:7.2

One day when Ganid asked Jesus why he had not devoted himself to the work of a public teacher, he said: "My son, everything must await the coming of its time. You are born into the world, but no amount of anxiety and no manifestation of impatience will help you to grow up. You must, in all such matters, wait upon time. Time alone will ripen the green fruit upon the tree. Season follows season and sundown follows sunrise only with the passing of time. I am now on the way to Rome with you and your father, and that is sufficient for today. My tomorrow is wholly in the hands of my Father in heaven." 130:5.3

"Prayer is the breath of the soul and should lead you to be persistent in your attempt to ascertain the Father's will. If any one of you has a neighbor, and you go to him at midnight and say: 'Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine on a journey has come to see me, and I have nothing to set before him'; and if your neighbor answers, 'Trouble me not, for the door is now shut and the children and I are in bed; therefore I cannot rise and give you bread,' you will persist, explaining that your friend hungers, and that you have no

food to offer him. I say to you, though your neighbor will not rise and give you bread because he is your friend, yet because of your importunity he will get up and give you as many loaves as you need. If, then, persistence will win favors even from mortal man, how much more will your persistence in the spirit win the bread of life for you from the willing hands of the Father in heaven. Again I say to you: Ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you. For every one who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks the door of salvation will be opened.” 144:2.3

That same evening Jesus made the long-to-be-remembered address to the apostles regarding the relative value of status with God and progress in the eternal ascent to Paradise. Said Jesus: “My children, if there exists a true and living connection between the child and the Father, the child is certain to progress continuously toward the Father’s ideals. True, the child may at first make slow progress, but the progress is none the less sure. The important thing is not the rapidity of your progress but rather its certainty. Your actual achievement is not so important as the fact that the *direction* of your progress is Godward. What you are becoming day by day is of infinitely more importance than what you are today. 147:5.7

STEP 13: GAIN PERSPECTIVE

Learn to appreciate the inevitabilities and compensations of life as you begin your endless exploration of God's creation.

From the human perspective, much in life seems unfair or tragic. An automobile accident, an unexpected letter—the slightest twist of the kaleidoscope and all is changed. Spiritual perspective is the broadened horizon which recognizes God's absolute control over the invisible world which underlies and supports physical creation. God's ways seem mysterious only because the limitations of your perspective prevent you from understanding the true nature of events. The day-to-day events of your life are easier to accept once you understand that God's hand either causes, or permits, all that happens. Such a perspective gives you comfort in the crush of sorrow when you come to understand that your Father can turn even heart-wrenching pain into actual good. God gives you what is good, while what is hard he permits only when his plans require the removal of a thing, situation, or relationship which stands in the way of your soul's expansion, or when such events will help build in you the tempered steel of real character. Your Father does not rescue you from pain, but endures it with you in loving companionship.

God never wants any of his children to be hurt, but he permits painful things to happen when they are necessary for you to learn the lessons of life, and even then he transforms the pain you experience into education which enriches your soul. With your cooperation, he transmutes even your regrettable experiences into ultimate good by infusing them with spiritual value, weaving your errors and neglect into his all-encompassing plan for the

evolution of the universes.

Some of life's tragedies are caused by physical circumstances inseparable from life on a planet governed by dependable physical laws, such as when an avalanche crushes an unprepared mountain climber. The rocks tumbled down because gravity, a physical law of God's ordaining, always pulls down unbalanced and unsupported objects. The climber's death is a tragedy to him and those who loved or depended on him, but it would be a far greater tragedy were gravity to become some whimsical force which could not be depended upon to work consistently. From another perspective, free will requires that the mountaineer not be prevented from climbing the dangerous route of his choosing, because God's plan for your education and advancement requires you to be in uncushioned contact with reality and exercise relatively complete freedom of action if you are to grow.

Other tragedies are caused by the malice or neglect of people towards others. God permits such harm because his respect for your free will applies to the evil as well as to the good, and authentic free will must embrace the freedom to act wrongly. Your Father wishes his sons and daughters to love and serve others voluntarily, from heartfelt desire, and this requires the liberty to do otherwise. But when harm touches those whose lives are dedicated to him, whether caused by physical forces or the agency of others, the Father reconfigures the outcome of such painful events or evil actions into ultimate good for all concerned.

Who can fathom the Creator's majesty or second-guess his foreknowledge or wisdom?

Who could have more perfectly designed his own life? Who believes his judgment more trustworthy or responsible, or his motivation higher? Whose intelligence better comprehends the consequences of events spanning galaxies and ages? The Father of lights lives astride creation in the timeless present, upholding and sustaining the existence of every thing and being through the unsearchable wisdom of his infinite mind. To see life as the Father does is to see it in truer perspective, wherein you detect his purposes through the variegated chatter of daily life and gain strength living as if seeing him who is invisible.

Sitting on a rocky cliff, you overlook the city as the sun sets behind you. Street lamps gradually alight in random stripes, and you watch cars threading their way home from work. You ponder the disparate lives and

problems represented by all those headlights—the jobs they are leaving and the families, friends, or loneliness to which they return. How the Father is able to personally relate to each of them surpasses human understanding — you only know that he does. God lives transcendent on Paradise, but also in every heart. His love-call echoes down lonely corridors and his arms bear up the wounded. His majesty shakes mighty mountains, and his eyes miss nothing. He reaches across the ages to find you where and as you are, and invites you to take your intended place in the endless expansion of the universes of his making. As your spiritual walk continues, you learn more of God’s eternal purposes, a little here, a little there, and increasingly you accrue a sustaining cosmic perspective. You experience our Father’s love and become ever more certain that he is with you always.

References from The Urantia Book:

The confusion and turmoil of Urantia do not signify that the Paradise Rulers lack either interest or ability to manage affairs differently. The Creators are possessed of full power to make Urantia a veritable paradise, but such an Eden would not contribute to the development of those strong, noble, and experienced characters which the Gods are so surely forging out on your world between the anvils of necessity and the hammers of anguish. Your anxieties and sorrows, your trials and disappointments, are just as much a part of the divine plan on your sphere as are the exquisite perfection and infinite adaptation of all things to their supreme purpose on the worlds of the central and perfect universe. 23:2.5

But inherent in this capacity for achievement is the responsibility of ethics, the necessity for recognizing that the world and the universe are filled with a multitude of differing types of beings. All of this magnificent creation, *including yourself*, was not made just for you. This is not an egocentric universe. The Gods have decreed, “It is more blessed to give than to receive,” and said your Master Son, “He who would be greatest among you let him be server of all.” 28:6.18

The universe of universes, including this small world called Urantia, is not being managed merely to meet your approval nor just to suit your convenience, much less to gratify your whims and satisfy your curiosity. The wise and all-powerful beings who are responsible for universe management undoubtedly know exactly what they are about; and so it becomes Life Carriers and behooves mortal minds to enlist in patient waiting and hearty co-operation with the rule of wisdom, the reign of power, and the march of progress. 65:5.3

You humans have begun an endless unfolding of an almost infinite panorama, a limitless expanding of never-ending, ever-widening spheres of opportunity for exhilarating service, matchless adventure, sublime uncer-

tainty, and boundless attainment. When the clouds gather overhead, your faith should accept the fact of the presence of the indwelling Adjuster, and thus you should be able to look beyond the mists of mortal uncertainty into the clear shining of the sun of eternal righteousness on the beckoning heights of the mansion worlds. . . . 108:6.8

Patience is exercised by those mortals whose time units are short; true maturity transcends patience by a forbearance born of real understanding.

To become mature is to live more intensely in the present, at the same time escaping from the limitations of the present. The plans of maturity, founded on past experience, are coming into being in the present in such manner as to enhance the values of the future.

The time unit of immaturity concentrates meaning-value into the present moment in such a way as to divorce the present of its true relationship to the not-present—the past-future. The time unit of maturity is proportioned so to reveal the co-ordinate relationship of past-present-future that the self begins to gain insight into the wholeness of events, begins to view the landscape of time from the panoramic perspective of broadened horizons, begins perhaps to suspect the nonbeginning, nonending eternal continuum, the fragments of which are called time. 118:1.6-8

Do not become discouraged by the discovery that you are human. Human nature may tend toward evil, but it is not inherently sinful. Be not downcast by your failure wholly to forget some of your regrettable experiences. The mistakes which you fail to forget in time will be forgotten in eternity. Lighten your burdens of soul by speedily acquiring a long-distance view of your destiny, a universe expansion of your career. 156:5.8

Human beings unfailingly become discouraged when they view only the transitory transactions of time. The present, when divorced from the past and the future, becomes exasperatingly trivial. Only a glimpse of the circle of eternity can inspire man to do his best and can challenge the best in him to do its utmost. 160:2.9

“Let not your hearts be troubled; all things will work together for the glory of God and the salvation of men.” 182:2.1

He taught men to place a high value upon themselves in time and in eternity. Because of this high estimate which Jesus placed upon men, he was willing to spend himself in the unremitting service of humankind. And it was this infinite worth of the finite that made the golden rule a vital factor in his religion. What mortal can fail to be uplifted by the extraordinary faith Jesus has in him? 196:2.10

STEP 14: GAIN FAITH

Gain faith that God's plan for you is incomparably better than any of your own devising, and that your highest happiness consists in doing his will. Experience the spiritual liberty of accepting your Father's responsibility for the outcome of events you undertake in faith.

Faith is an expression of universal law based on wholehearted reliance on the Sovereign of the universes and his ability to accomplish his will on earth and in your life without limit or hindrance. But how can you know your Father's will as life's paths and opportunities appear and move on before you? How can you know more certainly whether you are doing his will as you attempt to respond to the divine leadings within your soul?

On this world there are few things of which anyone can be truly sure; the fork in the road is often upon you before you are ready to choose your path, and to delay may jeopardize the opportunity. In such a case you must simply act, trusting in your Father's guidance. If you have prayed for a knowledge of God's will in a particular situation, once decision time arrives, to avoid action paralyzed by fear that you might err makes erring a virtual certainty.

When you are doing your best to live the Father's will, you are entitled to act decisively on faith even when the issue is clouded and you are confused. Hesitation, timidity, and half-measures poison faith and doom to failure even an otherwise correct choice. When decision time arrives you should be able to say, "Father, this is the course I believe you wish me to take, and unless you tell me otherwise, I'm going to move forward in that

direction."

Nations build navies so that, in times of war, they may engage the enemy, not sit safely in port. Likewise, God placed you on earth to participate in life, and therefore grieves to see you cravenly moored for fear of what the high seas of life may hold in store, afraid to experience that for which he placed you here. He desires that you launch forth, confident that he can and will shape your course along the paths charted by infinite wisdom.

Faith-actions must be undertaken in total confidence, otherwise, where is the faith? In such a situation, even if you err, God will make your choice right and bring about a good outcome in spite of your mistakes. When your course comports with the highest truth, goodness, and love, and you carry it out in accordance with God's leading to the best of your ability, he *makes* that course right, even if the decision itself might have been to some extent defective. The Father knows the limitations of your minds and natures, accepts you as you are, and adjusts his plans of perfection to fit the circumstances of his children here on earth, thus allowing you to be a partner with him in the achievement of your eternal destiny.

Acts of faith are always consistent with truth, beauty, goodness, and love, and when you are confused as to the Father's leading, those values will suggest his will, for it is inconceivable that God would ever lead you to do anything untrue, ugly, or unloving. Most day-to-day problems lack an obvious spiritual dimension, however, and you must make your choices based on ordinary common sense supported by the sound advice of friends. Even in those situations you must not neglect

a sense of God's leading, for, like any good parent, he is concerned about the details of your daily existence, that you live a happy and productive life, but especially that your soul prospers.

Faith injects the power of God into the affairs of your workaday world, infusing them with divine purpose. Faith is not simply the conviction that God exists, but that he is active and powerful in helping you win the battles of life. Faith unleashes energy from within to break down every barrier, win over every enemy, vanquish every addiction, conquer every disability, and still every fear. Faith plants your feet on the eternal highway, the end of which is Paradise and God himself. Faith links your heart to the Sovereign of the universes and discloses goals, purposes, and visions which empower you to run the final stretch after all things earthly crash.

The Father of light walks beside the chariot of your dreams, clearing the way before the pure in heart. God grants inner peace to those whose faith is anchored to the rock of his sovereignty, to those who understand that he does all things well. Whether life is long or short, faith sustains great human achievement and propels your soul into life eternal where even greater accomplishments beckon the sons and daughters of God.

Faith is the process by which you come to know your Maker. Faith solves mysteries,

References from The Urantia Book:

The providence of God consists in the interlocking activities of the celestial beings and the divine spirits who, in accordance with cosmic law, unceasingly labor for the honor of God and for the spiritual advancement of his universe children. 4:1.1

Man is spiritually indwelt by a surviving Thought Adjuster. If such a human mind is sincerely and spiritually motivated, if such a human soul desires to know God and become like him, honestly wants to do the Father's will, there exists no negative influence of mortal deprivation nor positive power of possible interference

opens prison doors, explores cavernous depths, and saves souls trapped in hopelessness or depravity. Faith tutors the young student of the spirit; its net brings all good things to you when you cast it out boldly. Faith opens eyes theretofore blinded by the distractions of a materialistic age, but never shows you quite all you would see, for the infinite Creator on whom your faith is focused resides in unfathomable mystery. By means of your faith, the Father stills your distracted thoughts, comforts your souls, and illuminates the pathways of righteous living into the spirit kingdom where God has prepared your eternal home.

Faith comforts the troubled soul of modern man and stills his mind amid the tensions and stresses of outward existence. Faith opens your soul to God, whose love envelops you, disclosing that which is most worthwhile in human existence.

Farther along our journey that which once was only believed, becomes known. But faith's object moves ever higher, from that which our minds possess in fullness to that which is still unfocused the hill across the range, still hazy to the trekking pilgrim, a challenge to his strengthening feet. The source of faith is God alone, who is as well the homeward destination toward which we travel, and whom we see ever clearer as Father.

which can prevent such a divinely motivated soul from securely ascending to the portals of Paradise. 5:1.7

The mortal mind can immediately think of a thousand and one things—catastrophic physical events, appalling accidents, horrific disasters, painful illnesses, and world-wide scourges—and ask whether such visitations are correlated in the unknown maneuvering of this probable functioning of the Supreme Being. Frankly, you do not know; you are not really sure. But you do observe that, as time passes, all these difficult and more or less mysterious situations *always* work out for the welfare and progress of the universes. 10:7.5

There is a great and glorious purpose in the march of the universes through space. All of your mortal struggling is not in vain. you are all part of an immense plan, a gigantic enterprise, and it is the vastness of the undertaking that renders it impossible to see very much of it at any one time and during any one life. you are all a part of an eternal project which the Gods are supervising and outworking. The whole marvelous and universal mechanism moves on majestically through space to the music of the meter of the infinite thought and the eternal purpose of the First Great Source and Center.

The eternal purpose of the eternal God is a high spiritual ideal. The events of time and the struggles of material existence are but the transient scaffolding which bridges over to the other side, to the promised land of spiritual reality and supernal existence. 32:5.1&2

There is in the mind of God a plan which embraces every creature of all his vast domains, and this plan is an eternal purpose of boundless opportunity, unlimited progress, and endless life. And the infinite treasures of such a matchless career are yours for the striving!

The goal of eternity is ahead! The adventure of divinity attainment lies before you! The race for perfection is on! whosoever will may enter, and certain victory will crown the efforts of every human being who will run the race of faith and trust, depending every step of the way on the leading of the indwelling Adjuster and on the guidance of that good spirit of the Universe Son, which so freely has been poured out upon all flesh. 32:5.7&8

While it is all too true that good cannot come of evil to the one who contemplates and performs evil, it is equally true that all things (including evil, potential and manifest) work together for good to all beings who know God, love to do his will, and are ascending Paradiseward according to his eternal plan and divine purpose. 54:4.7

When Thought Adjusters indwell human minds, they bring with them the model careers, the ideal lives, as determined and foreordained by themselves and the Personalized Adjusters of Divinington, which have been certified by the Personalized Adjuster of Urantia. Thus they begin work with a definite and predetermined plan for the intellectual and spiritual development of their human subjects, but it is not incumbent upon any human being to accept this plan. You are all subjects of predestination, but it is not foreordained that you must accept this divine predestination; you are at full liberty to reject any part or all of the Thought Adjusters' program. 110:2.1

“The act is ours, the consequences God’s.” 117:5.5

“Ganid, I have absolute confidence in my heavenly Father’s overcare; I am consecrated to doing the will of my Father in heaven. I do not believe that *real* harm can befall me; I do not believe that my lifework can really be jeopardized by anything my enemies might wish to visit upon me, and surely you have no violence to fear from your friends. I am absolutely assured that the entire universe is friendly to me—this all-powerful

truth I insist on believing with a wholehearted trust in spite of all appearances to the contrary.” 133:1.4

When the mourners saw that Mary had gone to greet Jesus, they withdrew for a short distance while both Martha and Mary talked with the Master and received further words of comfort and exhortation to maintain strong faith in the Father and complete resignation to the divine will. 168:0.11

STEP 15: EXPERIENCE ASSURANCE

Appreciate God's ceaseless fostering of your spiritual growth. Become more fully assured of our Father's unconditional love and begin to experience that inner peace which passes understanding.

The depletion of your inner resources shows through, and your shoulders slump as if bearing clods of mud. When fear or guilt burdens your mind you cannot act effectively or decisively, but when your inner state is in harmony with the universe, little stops you: roads straighten beneath your feet, invisible armies support you in battle, big problems shrink, small problems disappear, inner phantoms flee, and your mind clears for effective action.

God's love is unconditional, and his assurance of that love has always been available. Like a farmer casting seed corn onto indifferent ground, the Father continually offers spiritual seeds of faith and love to your unreceptive mind, hoping at least some will take root. He knows your time and season, when to water and when to fertilize, always making the most of what you give him. The comfort and assurance you increasingly experience show that at least a few of these seeds have begun to grow. You know this spiritual peace when you have it, but even more vividly, feel bereft and deprived when it seems temporarily beyond your reach.

There is a rhythm in human life and affairs; deep abiding peace is not always attainable. Emotions born of circumstance crest and ebb, and you feel as if you go in and out of synchrony with your Maker. Nevertheless, God doesn't want you to withdraw into seclusion to avoid the disturbance and confusion inseparable from an active life, but

rather he desires that you carry his assurance with you, a shimmering curtain of sanity to wrap around the problems of this strife-torn world, that you see them anew in peace and perspective.

Your work's outcome is uncertain, but your goals are not. You perceive your world through a glass darkly, but peace permeates and suffuses your soul with confidence. You know not where leads the road, only that God's love rests upon you, giving you the reward of the ages; you are grime-smeared from daily living, but clean within.

All seems well when suddenly the day grows dark and approaching thunder shakes the earth like an artillery barrage. Lightning dances amongst boiling black clouds, searing the sky. A shower of hailstones announces the edge of the front, and then the whole power of the storm is upon you—trees split, exploding as fiery bolts seek the earth; shards of fractured glass from blown-out windows explode onto your huddled family; winds assault the house's eaves, its frame groans; siding and shingles rip away and bounce like tumbleweeds across the field. You hold your frightened children tightly and pray that God will protect them, but for yourself fret not injury or even death, for you have committed the consequences of events beyond your control to God's hands and rest secure in his love and power.

When a vicious rabble storms your city's gates; when the teeth of a thousand gears grind your plans into failure; when storm waves swamp your shallow gunnels; when kin disown, friends abandon, and enemies gloat; when bills pour in beyond your bankrupt means; when the phone brings naught but

news you hate and all things earthly teeter— there is yet a place where you are safe; there is One who comforts your soul in darkest night.

Father, we love you for who you are and all you do for us. We need your help when we hurt, and know that you respond before we even ask. You give us our lives and the grace to endure. We crave to know more fully your spirit's presence. You answer our souls'

prayers and tell us the secrets of the spheres before words, and after sounds. Others shout, but you whisper, bathing our souls in light eternal. You speak the language of our hearts, extending the edges of the unfathomable of life. beyond human knowledge. You taught the seagull to fly, fashioned the aspen and the willow, and created every weed and crystal. Above all and before all, we worship you, Source

References from The Urantia Book:

Mortal man cannot possibly know the infinitude of the heavenly Father. Finite mind cannot think through such an absolute truth or fact. But this same finite human being can actually *feel*—literally experience—the full and undiminished impact of such an infinite Father's LOVE. 3:4.6

If mortal man is wholeheartedly spiritually motivated, unreservedly consecrated to the doing of the Father's will, then, since he is so certainly and so effectively spiritually endowed by the indwelling and divine Adjuster, there cannot fail to materialize in that individual's experience the sublime consciousness of knowing God and the supernal assurance of surviving for the purpose of finding God by the progressive experience of becoming more and more like him. 5:1.6

And when such a life of spirit guidance is freely and intelligently accepted, there gradually develops within the human mind a positive consciousness of divine contact and assurance of spirit communion; sooner or later "the Spirit bears witness with your spirit (the Adjuster) that you are a child of God." . . .

The consciousness of the spirit domination of a human life is presently attended by an increasing exhibition of the characteristics of the Spirit in the life reactions of such a spirit-led mortal, "for the fruits of the spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance." Such spirit-guided and divinely illuminated mortals, while they yet tread the lowly paths of toil and in human faithfulness perform the duties of their earthly assignments, have already begun to discern the lights of eternal life as they glimmer on the faraway shores of another world; already have they begun to comprehend the reality of that inspiring and comforting truth, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." And throughout every trial and in the presence of every hardship, spirit-born souls are sustained by that hope which transcends all fear because the love of God is shed abroad in all hearts by the presence of the divine Spirit. 34:6.12&13

Jesus portrayed the profound surety of the God-knowing mortal when he said: "To a God-knowing kingdom believer, what does it matter if all things earthly crash?" Temporal securities are vulnerable, but spiritual sureties are impregnable. When the flood tides of human adversity, selfishness, cruelty, hate, malice, and jealousy beat about the mortal soul, you may rest in the assurance that there is one inner bastion, the citadel of the spirit, which is absolutely unassailable; at least this is true of every human being who has dedicated the keeping of his soul to the indwelling spirit of the eternal God. 100:2.7

"Concerning the kingdom and your assurance of acceptance by the heavenly Father, let me ask what father among you who is a worthy and kindhearted father would keep his son in anxiety or suspense regarding his

status in the family or his place of security in the affections of his father's heart? Do you earth fathers take pleasure in torturing your children with uncertainty about their place of abiding love in your human hearts? Neither does your Father in heaven leave his faith children of the spirit in doubtful uncertainty as to their position in the kingdom. If you receive God as your Father, then indeed and in truth are you the sons of God. And if you are sons, then are you secure in the position and standing of all that concerns eternal and divine sonship." 142:5.2

"Come, therefore, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and you shall find rest for your souls. Take upon you the divine yoke, and you will experience the peace of God, which passes all understanding." 144:8.8

When my children once become self-conscious of the assurance of the divine presence, such a faith will expand the mind, ennoble the soul, reinforce the personality, augment the happiness, deepen the spirit perception, and enhance the power to love and be loved. 159:3.12

"If my words abide in you and you are minded to do the will of my Father, then are you truly my disciples. You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." 162:7.2

STEP 16: DEEPEN FELLOWSHIP

Share your spiritual life more fully with others and grow more unified in friendship. Increasingly appreciate, respect, trust, and rely on other pilgrims on the spiritual path.

For human friendships to flourish, trust must grow, which only comes through increasing disclosure of your inner self. Until you become willing to open yourself to your friends, they cannot learn who you are and what you truly care about. Some guard their inner selves like rivet-studded vaults, airtight and impregnable, lest others see the isolation and fears that dwell therein. Bats fly in search of an exit, and finding none, return to brood in darkness.

Secrecy cultures the fungus of pretense, but the sunshine of a friend's counsel returns you to healthy reality as you laugh into perspective your recurring foibles and failings. When you hide aspects of your lives from those you love most, living a lie of who you are not, you rob yourself of health, sanity, and happiness. Confiding in friends helps you resolve unbearable contradictions which have rent your personality almost to disruption. Their understanding words end your isolation, turn embarrassment into relief, and give you the courage no more to pretend.

Their unconditional love gives such friends license to be altogether blunt in their advice, since you know they have no motive but your own welfare, and nothing you might do could lessen their affection. Shall you leave such a friend outside the circle of your confidence and face alone the terrors of the night, when baring your soul, embarrassment ignored, will reap the harvest of life's promises? Shall shame over past treacheries deprive you of that which alone will cure their curse? Your

friend, held aloof, sees the locked chest of your experience and wonders what within its rusty hasps and bands of beaten iron there lies. What you hate most about yourself, your darkest secrets, when shared in confidence, open new worlds in which to dwell. Perhaps the odd rock from your stream will complete your friend's garden path, or his silt may make your flowers bloom.

Friends sustain you when you know not the way and your sky is leaden with the ashes of broken dreams. When the evening comes too late and the morrow too soon, when sparrows desert their young to the eagle's claw, a friend's presence settles fear like rain a dusty road. Your friends stay with you in trouble, save you from loneliness, surround you with love, share your joys, and strengthen you to fight life's battles. You are safer and stronger when they are near, for if the enemy breaks through the walls, you fight together, side by side.

Isolation is painful, no matter how close your relationship with God. Fleeing loneliness in shallow relationships, it becomes more real. Without friends, even in a crowded room you are hopeless, helpless, and miserable. The Father's kingdom is one in which you serve together; it is never a solitary experience. You derive strength from knowing that your friends care for you and would never betray your trust. You share life's roads and work together to achieve life's ends.

Careening boulders fill the narrow gorges of your minds, shaken loose by tremors from the deep; dust billows, and the sky darkens with impending death. A crevice in the rock—a way of escape? The passage leads deep within. Terrors stack high, no way back, you

feel your way into the unknown darkness. Shins bruised, you grope blindly through the cave toward the sound of falling water, which, ever louder, greets you with its spray. Chest deep in the pool, a faint current pushes you toward a weak refracted glow.

Content to live or die together, one last breath and you go under, fast now, pulled towards the light, banging through the chute, bunched fetus-like, no air left when—salvation—the stream breaks out and falls into a hidden mountain lake. A stone path leads through fields of columbines up the verdant valley. You know not the way, but keep going, until finally, sunlit fields, a protective moat, crystal ramparts before the city of your dreams, home at last. The drawbridge lowers

on glistening chains, and you enter, home, safe from fright.

The Master sent his followers forth two and two, that they not become discouraged by loneliness. The best friendships are among those who love God, who are dedicated to purposes beyond the skies, who are willing to be wave-tossed in pursuit of dreams. Two and two you are stronger by the square, shirts starched against life's acid vapors. Two and two you do God's will and find his house past the far field's brambles. You need each other to know the Father, for he lives not only in your heart, but in your brother's glance. Earthly friendship reveals both God and the nature of life on the heavenly worlds.

References from The Urantia Book:

These are the angels who seek to divest the associations of intelligent beings of all artificiality while endeavoring to facilitate the interassociation of will creatures on a basis of real self-understanding and genuine mutual appreciation. 39:3.4

Intellectually, socially, and spiritually two moral creatures do not merely double their personal potentials of universe achievement by partnership technique; they more nearly quadruple their attainment and accomplishment possibilities. 43:8.11

And of all forms of evil, none are more destructive of personality status than betrayal of trust and disloyalty to one's confiding friends. In committing this deliberate sin, Caligastia so completely distorted his personality that his mind has never since been able fully to regain its equilibrium. 67:1.3

Spiritual growth is mutually stimulated by intimate association with other religionists. 100:0.2

Happiness and joy take origin in the inner life. You cannot experience real joy all by yourself. A solitary life is fatal to happiness. Even families and nations will enjoy life more if they share it with others. 111:4.7

Personality cannot very well perform in isolation. Man is innately a social creature; he is dominated by the craving of belongingness. It is literally true, "No man lives unto himself." 112:1.16

Sometimes Thomas would get permission from Andrew to go off by himself for a day or two. But he soon learned that such a course was not wise; he early found that it was best, when he was downhearted, to stick close to his work and to remain near his associates. 139:8.11

Many noble human impulses die because there is no one to hear their expression. Truly, it is not good for man to be alone. Some degree of recognition and a certain amount of appreciation are essential to the development

of human character. Without the genuine love of a home, no child can achieve the full development of normal character. Character is something more than mere mind and morals. Of all social relations calculated to develop character, the most effective and ideal is the affectionate and understanding friendship of man and woman in the mutual embrace of intelligent wedlock. 160:2.6

Every human being sooner or later acquires a certain concept of this world and a certain vision of the next. Now it is possible, through personality association, to unite these views of temporal existence and eternal prospects. Thus does the mind of one augment its spiritual values by gaining much of the insight of the other. In this way men enrich the soul by pooling their respective spiritual possessions. Likewise, in this same way, man is enabled to avoid that ever-present tendency to fall victim to distortion of vision, prejudice of view-point, and narrowness of judgment. Fear, envy, and conceit can be prevented only by intimate contact with other minds. 160:2.7

Isolation tends to exhaust the energy charge of the soul. Association with one's fellows is essential to the renewal of the zest for life and is indispensable to the maintenance of the courage to fight those battles consequent upon the ascent to the higher levels of human living. Friendship enhances the joys and glorifies the triumphs of life. Loving and intimate human associations tend to rob suffering of its sorrow and hardship of much of its bitterness. The presence of a friend enhances all beauty and exalts every goodness. 160:2.8

Personality association and mutual affection is an efficient insurance against evil. Difficulties, sorrow, disappointment, and defeat are more painful and disheartening when borne alone. Association does not transmute evil into righteousness, but it does aid in greatly lessening the sting. Said your Master, "Happy are they who mourn"—if a friend is at hand to comfort. There is positive strength in the knowledge that you live for the welfare of others, and that these others likewise live for your welfare and advancement. Man languishes in isolation. 160:2.9

"Judas is no more with you because his love grew cold, and because he refused to trust you, his loyal brethren. Have you not read in the Scripture where it is written: 'It is not good for man to be alone. No man lives to himself'? And also where it says: 'He who would have friends must show himself friendly'? And did I not even send you out to teach, two and two, that you might not become lonely and fall into the mischief and miseries of isolation? You also well know that, when I was in the flesh, I did not permit myself to be alone for long periods. From the very beginning of your associations I always had two or three of you constantly by my side or else very near at hand even when I communed with the Father. Trust, therefore, and confide in one another." 193:3.2

STEP 17: SERVE OTHERS

Work together with greater initiative and enthusiasm to serve your fellows in lasting ways, recognize that you thus serve and honor your Father in heaven.

Faith is the foundation of your spiritual life, but service to others is its expression. Through God's leading, every day can open hearts, inspire minds, and leave others better by your presence.

That you live in God's peace never numbs you to everyday responsibilities or makes you indifferent to need or suffering. You hurt with the wounded sparrow as it flops across the yard, every wing-beat an agony. You feel the wind-driven sleet against the lobsterman's chapped cheeks and hear the snow crunch with every step of the soldier's blood-stained boots. Your skin peels with the leper, and your heart aches with the high plains farmer as his wheat withers from wind and drought. That you can help so few of these brothers and sisters does not discourage you, however, because you see their needs as part of a limitless landscape of eternal significance in which God, who knows all, is ultimately responsible for all. You take not all of struggling humanity's burdens upon yourself, for you could not, but you know there is One whose wisdom and power are sufficient for any problem and by whose grace you are saved. That you are not personally accountable for others' welfare does not lead you to indifference or resignation over their plight. Rather does it free your mind from futile worry — enabling you to work all the harder, sustained by faith in the God of surging seas and circumstance who lets even souls like yourself work to build his kingdom.

For whom should you live, if not for others? Is life's purpose but to lay up redundant treasures for profligate heirs to squander? Only what you do for others lasts, the rest is dust and ashes, temples to be ravaged by looters or buried in desert sand. The bridge you build—for what purpose if no one crosses? Your only lasting possessions, your treasures in heaven, are those things you do for others.

To those without curtain ropes to pull, pages to turn, or lines to speak, life's stage is without purpose. With never a part to play, you can only be a spectator. Giving of yourself is what makes you a participant. The time to work is now. No longer should you sit and wonder when might come the call, for the Father speaks to each of us and tells us how best to serve his kingdom. Earth's billions languish in weary distress, waiting for someone to quench their discontent, salve their wounds, and be a brother. The needs of the stricken touch the tenderhearted, who answer their cry with wise and lasting help which gives them strength to rise and help themselves, and such service endures to cheer thousands through its outspreading ripples.

You can only truly serve by love, for without love your gestures are empty. To find your service you must ask the Father to show you your part in his plans, for he has designed each of us to fulfill a particular work which he may disclose in an intuition of deep calling — or perhaps in the unfolding of opportunities. Until opened, the door to your service may look like many others, but the Father's hand will guide you to that which you may make your own and to that which can become your destiny.

Service is faith's expression, and faith is service's fuel. The stronger your faith, the

greater your desire to carry out this service in effective and lasting ways.

References from The Urantia Book:

One of the most important lessons to be learned during your mortal career is *teamwork*. . . . Few are the duties in the universe for the lone servant. The higher you ascend, the more lonely you become when temporarily without the association of your fellows. 28:5.14

Service—purposeful service, not slavery—is productive of the highest satisfaction and is expressive of the divinest dignity. Service—more service, increased service, difficult service, adventurous service, and at last divine and perfect service—is the goal of time and the destination of space. But ever will the play cycles of time alternate with the service cycles of progress. 28:6.17

When the spiritual tests of greatness are applied, the moral elements are not disregarded, but the quality of unselfishness revealed in disinterested labor for the welfare of one's earthly fellows, particularly worthy beings in need and in distress, that is the real *measure* of planetary greatness. 28:6.20

You will learn that you increase your burdens and decrease the likelihood of success by taking yourself too seriously. Nothing can take precedence over the work of your status sphere—this world or the next. Very important is the work of preparation for the next higher sphere, but nothing equals the importance of the work of the world in which you are actually living. But though the *work* is important, the *self* is not. When you feel important, you lose energy to the wear and tear of ego dignity so that there is little energy left to do the work. Self-importance, not work-importance, exhausts immature creatures; it is the self element that exhausts, not the effort to achieve. You can do important work if you do not become self-important; you can do several things as easily as one if you leave yourself out. 48:6.26

And when a human being does find God, there is experienced within the soul of that being such an indescribable restlessness of triumph in discovery that he is impelled to seek loving service-contact with his less illuminated fellows, not to disclose that he has found God, but rather to allow the overflow of the welling-up of eternal goodness within his own soul to refresh and ennoble his fellows. Real religion leads to increased social service. 102:3.4

“Always remember that God does not reward man for what he does but for what he is; therefore should you extend help to your fellows without the thought of rewards. Do good without thought of benefit to the self.” 131:8.5

When Jesus heard this, he said: “Be willing, then, to take up your responsibilities and follow me. Do your good deeds in secret; when you give alms, let not the left hand know what the right hand does.” 140:6.11

The Master fully realized that certain social results would appear in the world as a consequence of the spread of the gospel of the kingdom; but he intended that all such desirable social manifestations should appear as unconscious and inevitable outgrowths, or natural fruits, of this inner personal experience of individual believers, this purely spiritual fellowship and communion with the divine spirit which indwells and activates all such believers. 170:5.12

“To every one who has, more shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him who has not, even

that which he has shall be taken away. You cannot stand still in the affairs of the eternal kingdom. My Father requires all his children to grow in grace and in a knowledge of the truth. You who know these truths must yield the increase of the fruits of the spirit and manifest a growing devotion to the unselfish service of your fellow servants. And remember that, inasmuch as you minister to one of the least of my brethren, you have done this service to me.” 176:3.5

Jesus taught that *service* to one’s fellows is the highest concept of the brotherhood of spirit believers. Salvation should be taken for granted by those who believe in the fatherhood of God. The believer’s chief concern should not be the selfish desire for personal salvation but rather the unselfish urge to love and, therefore, serve one’s fellows even as Jesus loved and served mortal men. 188:4.9

In winning souls for the Master, it is not the first mile of compulsion, duty, or convention that will transform man and his world, but rather the *second* mile of free service and liberty-loving devotion that betokens the Jesusonian reaching forth to grasp his brother in love and sweep him on under spiritual guidance toward the higher and divine goal of mortal existence. Christianity even now willingly goes the *first* mile, but mankind languishes and stumbles along in moral darkness because there are so few genuine second-milers—so few professed followers of Jesus who really live and love as he taught his disciples to live and love and serve.

The call to the adventure of building a new and transformed human society by means of the spiritual rebirth of Jesus’ brotherhood of the kingdom should thrill all who believe in him as men have not been stirred since the days when they walked about on earth as his companions in the flesh. 195:10.5&6

STEP 18: SHARE YOUR SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

Willingly accept your obligation and privilege to help share the good news and strive to carry this knowledge of God's love to your fellows.

Now that you know who you are, you must help others know the same. You now live on a promontory of grace above a choppy sea from which you can rescue the shipwrecked and the asleep. But shouted-down directions are not enough: a thrown rope they will seldom accept, for those drowning resist deliverance from familiar waters. First you must tell them of their worth to the Father, for most lack not a vision of God but of themselves as his beloved sons and daughters.

Those resisting have laid down tightly-fitted stones across the pathways to their souls which shed the water of life like sidewalks do rain. The willing soul beneath senses but is shut off from the life above. Beaten, the stones only seat more firmly, but one with the patience to observe can usually find some loose cobble through which the spirit may channel life to the parched soul beneath. The Father's love rains down from above, and with but the slightest access to the deserts of the soul, God reveals himself directly and sets onto the eternal adventure a reborn son or daughter.

It's not possible to completely shut out God's spirit, whose radiating glow warms the bleakest wall. Neither hurt nor hate can entirely negate the action of the indwelling spirit, for its powerful currents move on levels far deeper than the emotional surfaces which occupy your everyday attention. But how do you help those who only know to live as they always have, unaware of God's purposes? What key opens the gate house to the mansion of their destiny? Can you be master carvers

and lure out the secret figure trapped within the gnarly bough? Not knowing how flowed the sap to form its tortured bole, can you free each gesture and swirl of hair when you carve in twilight and your knife is dull? Who will guide your hands that you sculpt not where wood should rest? A voice deep within knows the times and seasons of your brothers' moods, when and when not to speak. Your spirit speaks with his, and if you share in love, his weary eyes may unmask in remembered echo that place of which you speak.

The language of your sharing is less in words than in your daily walk with God. Love is most clearly seen in the unspoken actions of daily life, proving that of which tongues only speak. Words alone are unconvincing, for you show your love in what you do; true affection surges forth in the way you live.

The season will pass in which you can share with your brother what you have learned. Your earthly times are short and are quickly over, so you must act while you can, for each day is one less remaining. You cannot speak with each brother who passes by, but when the inner spirit leads, you must not hesitate. Then God can nurse the tender spark of passing interest into a blaze fatal to the life of self, opening vistas of the heavenly worlds.

Our Father, we thank you that we may share in your work and pass along what you have given us. We know but little of you, heavenly Father, but we know that you are first in love, and that all good things are done by your spirit. We know that you love all your children and long to commune with each of them as you do with us. Guide us in helping bring your kingdom here to earth. Lead us to

serve our brothers in effective and lasting ways, that we fail you not. Open up pathways of spirit, that what we say may be honest,

loving, and helpful. We love you, righteous Father. Be with us as we share you with those who know you less.

References from The Urantia Book:

Spiritual development depends, first, on the maintenance of a living spiritual connection with true spiritual forces and, second, on the continuous bearing of spiritual fruit: yielding the ministry to one's fellows of that which has been received from one's spiritual benefactors. 100:2.1

“Let me emphatically state this eternal truth: If you, by truth co-ordination, learn to exemplify in your lives this beautiful wholeness of righteousness, your fellow men will then seek after you that they may gain what you have so acquired. The measure wherewith truth seekers are drawn to you represents the measure of your truth endowment, your righteousness. The extent to which you have to go with your message to the people is, in a way, the measure of your failure to live the whole or righteous life, the truth-co-ordinated life.” 155:1.5

“Are you fearful, soft, and ease-seeking? Are you afraid to trust your future in the hands of the God of truth, whose sons you are? Are you distrustful of the Father, whose children you are? Will you go back to the easy path of the certainty and intellectual settledness of the religion of traditional authority, or will you gird yourself to go forward with me into that uncertain and troublous future of proclaiming the new truths of the religion of the spirit, the kingdom of heaven in the hearts of men?” 155:5.13

“If any man would come after me, let him disregard himself, take up his responsibilities daily, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life selfishly, shall lose it, but whosoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's, shall save it. What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul? What would a man give in exchange for eternal life? Be not ashamed of me and my words in this sinful and hypocritical generation, even as I will not be ashamed to acknowledge you when in glory I appear before my Father in the presence of all the celestial hosts.” 158:7.5

Remember that you are commissioned to preach this gospel of the kingdom—the supreme desire to do the Father's will coupled with the supreme joy of the faith realization of sonship with God—and you must not allow anything to divert your devotion to this one duty. Let all mankind benefit from the overflow of your loving spiritual ministry, enlightening intellectual communion, and uplifting social service; but none of these humanitarian labors, nor all of them, should be permitted to take the place of proclaiming the gospel. These mighty ministrations are the social by-products of the still more mighty and sublime ministrations and transformations wrought in the heart of the kingdom believer by the living Spirit of Truth and by the personal realization that the faith of a spirit-born man confers the assurance of living fellowship with the eternal God. 178:1.11

You are not to be passive mystics or colorless ascetics; you should not become dreamers and drifters, supinely trusting in a fictitious Providence to provide even the necessities of life. You are indeed to be gentle in your dealings with erring mortals, patient in your intercourse with ignorant men, and forbearing under provocation; but you are also to be valiant in defense of righteousness, mighty in the promulgation of truth, and aggressive in the preaching of this gospel of the kingdom, even to the ends of the earth. 178:1.14

Do not forget that you are commissioned to go forth preaching only the good news. You are not to attack the old ways; you are skillfully to put the leaven of new truth in the midst of the old beliefs. Let the Spirit of Truth do his own work. Let controversy come only when they who despise the truth force it upon you. But when the willful

unbeliever attacks you, do not hesitate to stand in vigorous defense of the truth which has saved and sanctified you.
178:1.16

“Go, then, into all the world proclaiming this gospel of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of men to all nations and races and ever be wise in your choice of methods for presenting the good news to the different races and tribes of mankind. Freely you have received this gospel of the kingdom, and you will freely give the good news to all nations. Fear not the resistance of evil, for I am with you always, even to the end of the ages. And my peace I leave with you.” 191:4.4

To Philip he said, “Philip, do you obey me?” Philip answered, “Yes, Lord, I will obey you even with my life.” Then said Jesus: “If you would obey me, go then into the lands of the gentiles and proclaim this gospel. The prophets have told you that to obey is better than to sacrifice. By faith have you become a God-knowing kingdom son. There is but one law to obey—that is the command to go forth proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom. Cease to fear men; be unafraid to preach the good news of eternal life to your fellows who languish in darkness and hunger for the light of truth.” 192:2.11

Step 19: Love Each Other

Value others as beloved sons and daughters of God and strive to love each of them as does your Father in heaven.

Your heart longs to love your fellows, and this yearning cannot be quenched, for the soul of hungry man was made to love and is satisfied with nothing less. The roads of love often loop and sometimes fail, but the urge is irrepressible, unstoppable even by vilest hate or cruelest circumstance. Unexplainable, unconcerned with place, position, status, or merit, love looks upward, existing in a state of becoming.

How to love is the ages' question, the grail of prophets' search — how to love as parents love their children, how to love others as your Father loves you. How do you begin to love, and how can you make love last? It begins in mystery, from an unknown place deep within, for unknown reasons. You understand not why you love, only that you do, for love's ether resists analysis by itself or others. True love calculates no cost, effort, or reward, but simply exists in a spirit of defenseless kindness. How can you capture such a spirit in the larger world, toward the unlovely, the unkempt, the cruel, and the unfaithful? Can you look at your brothers and sisters through your Father's eyes and see what he sees, without judging?

You are known by who and what you love. Some people love houses and goods, some appearances, and some even love deceit as a way of life, delighting to prove themselves more clever than the gullible. Some love money, power, or fame; others love humbler things, and it is to them your Master promised the kingdom. Your loves leave a path behind you like contrails in the sky or footprints on a

sandy beach.

The garments of love are made from the Father's cloth. You draw the stuff of love from his storehouse and fashion it to clothe the naked. Acting out love precipitates true love; you love by loving. Acting as if you love ignites love itself, for the more loving you are toward others, the more that love reflects back, amplified in the mutual experience, creating in its object the compulsion to reciprocate.

The universes were born in love, not by fire alone. Love is the inner urge of life, and when you love, that mighty force resonates with universal power from on high, promising new life and a renewed self. By its light you see. The cloud of unknowing parts, and golden rays bathe the giver and receiver of love as the Lord of the universe reveals himself and finds expression.

The absence of love is indifference. Apart from love, all relationships are meaningless, futile, and deceptive. But in the Father's love you are complete — your powers are restored, ancient swamps are drained, shrouds are lifted, and you see into the heart of God at the moment of creation.

Those who doubt the power of love know not the joy of life. Those who place things above love are prisoners of illusion, for no possession or position is worth the loss of love, which endures when the heaps of things you gather rust or go to others. Love outlasts things and is sweeter. Love seines out the good in experience, enduring when all else fails. Love soothes your fevered forehead and stays the executioner's hand. Love alone — not solitary prayers by cloister walls — makes

your life worthwhile and God more real. Love bridges the chasm between what you are and what you can become; it gives you all you

have and are, and without it you are empty, trapped in a debtor's prison of negativity and despair.

References from The Urantia Book:

These high levels of human living are attained in the supreme love of God and in the unselfish love of man. If you love your fellow men, you must have discovered their values. Jesus loved men so much because he placed such a high value upon them. You can best discover values in your associates by discovering their motivation. If someone irritates you, causes feelings of resentment, you should sympathetically seek to discern his viewpoint, his reasons for such objectionable conduct. If once you understand your neighbor, you will become tolerant, and this tolerance will grow into friendship and ripen into love. 100:4.4

If you could only fathom the motives of your associates, how much better you would understand them. If you could only know your fellows, you would eventually fall in love with them.

You cannot truly love your fellows by a mere act of the will. Love is only born of thoroughgoing understanding of your neighbor's motives and sentiments. It is not so important to love all men today as it is that each day you learn to love one more human being. If each day or each week you achieve an understanding of one more of your fellows, and if this is the limit of your ability, then you are certainly socializing and truly spiritualizing your personality. Love is infectious, and when human devotion is intelligent and wise, love is more catching than hate. But only genuine and unselfish love is truly contagious. If each mortal could only become a focus of dynamic affection, this benign virus of love would soon pervade the sentimental emotion-stream of humanity to such an extent that all civilization would be encompassed by love, and that would be the realization of the brotherhood of man. 100:4.5&6

In the true meaning of the word, love connotes mutual regard of whole personalities, whether human or divine or human *and* divine. . . . Everything nonspiritual in human experience, excepting personality, is a means to an end. Every true relationship of mortal man with other persons—human or divine—is an end in itself. 112:2.3&4

Jesus naturally loved his people; he loved his family, and this natural affection had been tremendously augmented by his extraordinary devotion to them. The more fully you bestow yourself upon your fellows, the more you come to love them; and since Jesus had given himself so fully to his family, he loved them with a great and fervent affection. 129:0.2

The disciples early learned that the Master had a profound respect and sympathetic regard for *every* human being he met, and they were tremendously impressed by this uniform and unvarying consideration which he so consistently gave to all sorts of men, women, and children. He would pause in the midst of a profound discourse that he might go out in the road to speak good cheer to a passing woman laden with her burden of body and soul. He would interrupt a serious conference with his apostles to fraternize with an intruding child. Nothing ever seemed so important to Jesus as the *individual human* who chanced to be in his immediate presence. 138:8.9

From the Sermon on the Mount to the discourse of the Last Supper, Jesus taught his followers to manifest *fatherly* love rather than *brotherly* love. Brotherly love would love your neighbor as you love yourself, and that would be adequate fulfillment of the "golden rule." But fatherly affection would require that you should

love your fellow mortals as Jesus loves you. 140:5.1

“You well know the commandment which directs that you love one another; that you love your neighbor even as yourself. But I am not wholly satisfied with even that sincere devotion on the part of my children. I would have you perform still greater acts of love in the kingdom of the believing brotherhood. And so I give you this new commandment: That you love one another even as I have loved you. And by this will all men know that you are my disciples if you thus love one another.” 180:1.1

In the kingdom of the believing brotherhood of God-knowing truth lovers, this golden rule takes on living qualities of spiritual realization on those higher levels of interpretation which cause the mortal sons of God to view this injunction of the Master as requiring them so to relate themselves to their fellows that they will receive the highest possible good as a result of the believer’s contact with them. This is the essence of true religion: that you love your neighbor as yourself. 180:5.7

STEP 20: LOVE JESUS

Come to know and love Jesus. Friendship with him will give enthusiasm and purpose to your life.

They say two thousand years ago was born a child, announced by angels, to modest Jews who made their home in Nazareth. They say his father died while he was yet a youth, and with his hands he worked to support his father's family along the hills and shores of Galilee. Then he traveled for a time, learning of the Roman world while sharing the love of God, spreading good cheer to hundreds in his path. They say he was tested in all the ways of life and in partnership with God overcame life's temptations, difficulties, and crises with faith and steadfast devotion. Unsheltered from life's agonies, he was faithful to the greater vision of God's purpose he had known before the worlds began.

When his time had come, they say he chose apostles who left their homes and families to share his life, to walk the dusty roads of Palestine and call their people to God's service. They say that when he looked upon a man, he saw into his very soul, and that person thought he glimpsed the heart of God. They say he was a man among men; rugged Galilean fishermen called him Master. They say he healed the sick, made the blind to see, forgave sin, and raised the dead; that he offered abundant springs of living water, strength for the weak, comfort for the brokenhearted, encouragement for the downcast, understanding for babes, something for all who knew they lacked. The healing rays of God's love he focused on every secret place in the hearts of men and made whole those whose lives were torn. They say the common people heard him gladly and craved his presence—friends lowered a paralytic

through a roof just to be near him, and a prostitute washed his feet with her tears.

He said there was none good but God, and told those he healed that *their* faith had made them whole. He taught simple friendship with God and service of man; about the heavenly kingdom, righteousness, the peace of God, and eternal life. The high priests saw of course the dangers in his self-forgetful teaching, that man could relate directly with God in heaven; if so, what need for all their priests and ritual? Failing to still his fearless voice, they forced the weakling Roman governor to slay one who, having saved others, refused to save himself.

They say that on the third day the great stone wheel which blocked his sepulcher rolled open and he arose and for forty days appeared to those who shared his love. On the day of Pentecost they say he rose to heaven, but sent his spirit to be with those who loved the truth; it filled their souls with power and made all things new. His followers could not be cowed. They spread the story of his life throughout the Roman world, honored to die for the one they called the Christ.

This man, about whom more books have been written than any other, existed in unimaginable magesty before the worlds began. He came to earth to reveal his Father's love. His life became the mystery of man in God and God in man, one forever. Once you truly know him your life changes, for in him reposes what you can be if you will but live the life of faith. He is the secret of your spiritual life. He is your faith's fulcrum, embodying all of God you can know. Beyond him, anything you think you know is mere abstraction. You are a branch of his true vine

and accomplish nothing apart from him. He knows the ways you take and why. He gives you his own life, entering your mind to make it clean and strong.

Help us to love you, gracious Lord. Help us to understand your words of goodness and life. Live anew in us, for we know that every good thing comes through you, and without you we are powerless. When our lives are convoluted and we have no idea for what to pray, translate our heartfelt desires and bring

your peace and wisdom to our confused minds. We depend on you to make our lives worthwhile, a credit to your name. Root out every shadow of evil and darkness; break us, if need be, to bring us fully into your kingdom's service. We crave your daily companionship and approval; we crave to bask in the brightness of your smile. You promised to prepare a place above for those who love to do your will; prepare one here as well, that your presence overflow in our hearts and lives.

References from The Urantia Book:

To your universe and all its inhabited worlds the Sovereign Son is, to all practical intents and purposes, God. 33:1.4

Though the Spirit of Truth is poured out upon all flesh, this spirit of the Son is almost wholly limited in function and power by man's personal reception of that which constitutes the sum and substance of the mission of the bestowal Son. 34:5.5

Even on Urantia, these seraphim teach the everlasting truth: If your own mind does not serve you well, you can exchange it for the mind of Jesus of Nazareth, who always serves you well. 48:6.15

Jesus was the perfectly unified human personality. And today, as in Galilee, he continues to unify mortal experience and to co-ordinate human endeavors. He unifies life, ennobles character, and simplifies experience. He enters the human mind to elevate, transform, and transfigure it. It is literally true: "If any man has Christ Jesus within him, he is a new creature; old things are passing away; behold, all things are becoming new." 100:7.18

Jesus was and is the new and living way whereby man can come into the divine inheritance which the Father has decreed shall be his for but the asking. 101:6.10

Jesus made it plain that he had come to establish personal and eternal relations with men which should forever take precedence over all other human relationships. 141:7.5

On both friends and foes he exercised a strong and peculiarly fascinating influence. Multitudes would follow him for weeks, just to hear his gracious words and behold his simple life. Devoted men and women loved Jesus with a well-nigh superhuman affection. And the better they knew him the more they loved him. And all this is still true; even today and in all future ages, the more man comes to know this God-man, the more he will love and follow after him. 149:2.14

These gentiles were not afraid of Jesus; they dared to accept his message. All down through the ages men have not been unable to comprehend Jesus; they have been afraid to. 156:2.4

You learn about God from Jesus by observing the divinity of his life, not by depending on his teachings. From

the life of the Master you may each assimilate that concept of God which represents the measure of your capacity to perceive realities spiritual and divine, truths real and eternal. The finite can never hope to comprehend the Infinite except as the Infinite was focalized in the time-space personality of the finite experience of the human life of Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus well knew that God can be known only by the realities of experience; never can he be understood by the mere teaching of the mind. Jesus taught his apostles that, while they never could fully understand God, they could most certainly *know* him, even as they had known the Son of Man. You can know God, not by understanding what Jesus said, but by knowing what Jesus was. Jesus *was* a revelation of God. 169:4.3&4

Jesus is the spiritual lens in human likeness which makes visible to the material creature Him who is invisible. He is your elder brother who, in the flesh, makes *known* to you a Being of infinite attributes whom not even the celestial hosts can presume fully to understand. 169:4.13

“You must abide in me, and I in you; the branch will die if it is separated from the vine. As the branch cannot bear fruit except it abides in the vine, so neither can you yield the fruits of loving service except you abide in me. Remember: I am the real vine, and you are the living branches. He who lives in me, and I in him, will bear much fruit of the spirit and experience the supreme joy of yielding this spiritual harvest. If you will maintain this living spiritual connection with me, you will bear abundant fruit. If you abide in me and my words live in you, you will be able to commune freely with me, and then can my living spirit so infuse you that you may ask whatsoever my spirit wills and do all this with the assurance that the Father will grant you your petition.” 180:2.1

Christianity has indeed done a great service for this world, but what is now most needed is Jesus. The world needs to see Jesus living again on earth in the experience of spirit-born mortals who effectively reveal the Master to all men. It is futile to talk about a revival of primitive Christianity; you must go forward from where you find yourself. Modern culture must become spiritually baptized with a new revelation of Jesus’ life and illuminated with a new understanding of his gospel of eternal salvation. And when Jesus becomes thus lifted up, he will draw all men to himself. Jesus’ disciples should be more than conquerors, even overflowing sources of inspiration and enhanced living to all men. 195:10.1

To “follow Jesus” means to personally share his religious faith and to enter into the spirit of the Master’s life of unselfish service for man. One of the most important things in human living is to find out what Jesus believed, to discover his ideals, and to strive for the achievement of his exalted life purpose. Of all human knowledge, that which is of greatest value is to know the religious life of Jesus and how he lived it. 196:1.3

STEP 21: LOVE GOD

Grow in your knowledge, love, and worship of the heavenly Father, the source of that infinite love which created and sustains you.

Mankind roils as a choppy sea, delighting in its frailties; the earth groans beneath baroque invention, distressed by abuse. Fissures yawn to swallow you up, thieves eye hungrily your meager treasure, and when you think of life's approaching end, you quiver.

But heavenly Father, you know our names and all our ways. Take us fully into your kingdom and give us the peace our hearts crave. Help us dip our battered spoons into the ocean of your love, to disappear into your infinity, that we emerge reconstructed. We love you, Father, and long to love you more. You are the beginning and the end; you control the comings and goings of all things. Give us your peace, heavenly Father, that we may feel secure as we strive to do your will in the turmoil of life. Help us follow you in happy times as we know we must in the blast of the storm. Help us thank you in joy with no less conviction than we plead to you in despair. Our souls' desires are concealed in you; clarify our weak and disorderly minds. Come in power to the children of your spirit quest! The heavens reveal your sovereign power, and your spirit descends to inspire all who seek.

With eyes of spirit you perceive beauty in the ordinary, flecks of gold in river silt. you see the excellence of your plan and the wisdom of your calling. Your peace rests upon you, and you are learning your will. The bands which held you back are melting; the sun rises to warm the mountain face. That which trapped you has lost its power, and you stand free to live the destiny you have laid out for

you. you could not choose another way.

Dear Father, you have shown your truth in all of its beauty and eternal goodness; your joy in the commonplace, knowing it was fashioned by your hands. You see beyond disharmony and disease to meadows of rest and fulfillment. We see you in the shadows, behind the door, and ride with your love upon the wind. We will follow you forever and beyond, until evil and sin collapse into nothingness. You comfort our hearts, share our joys, and fight with us in every forward struggle. You are the only true God; we know you will keep us safe.

Loving the Creator is the beginning of life itself. In loving God you come to know him, and yourself as his son or daughter. Worshipping your Maker lifts you from earth's tribulations to the shores of Paradise—in spirit, now; in reality, later. In worshipping God you join your hungry heart to the infinite Source of all things, and in that communion both find fulfillment.

Your Father is gracious and majestic, infinitely wise, powerful, and all-knowing. He sees behind the curtain and knows the end from the beginning. What you see of life is the merest prelude, a glimpsed preview of your eternal career which, as experiences accumulate, fill in from seeming randomness to a crystal's matrix precision. God's eternal plan includes a specific place for you, and you find your highest usefulness and joy in fulfilling your purpose set out before the world began. In the fullness of time, the joint witness of all who survive these initial lives on the whirling spheres of space will express the supreme whole of God's evolutionary plan.

You love God not only because of his nature, but because he cared enough to create and sustain you. He answers your prayers, looks after you in hardship, and provides you worlds on which to live after your time on earth is over. God reassures your doubting human hearts as the currents of his love nourish your spirits. He shelters you from the terrors of the night and encourages you when your shoulders droop. He knows your path and name and is the perfect Father. His divine plan provides for your every present need as well as every possibility for the future, for in him you live, move, and have your being.

The Lord of lights is a moving force, a divine flame who sweeps before him all who stand stiff-legged, but who gathers up the meek and the humble. You sleep cradled in his love. Imbued with power from on high, go forth to do his gracious bidding. His image inspires your mind as you taste the purpose of all your

striving. Reborn, by day you see the face of God in every flower, and at night you rest in the knowledge of his affection. When all else earthly fails, you follow his path across the trackless desert dunes. His house is near, and you have the key. The Eternal's name is written on your heart, lifted by a thought, and powerful to save.

Help us hear your words and follow your spirit, Father. Show us the mysteries of life that we may fathom the depths of your love. Give us more of your very own self, and carry us along when the way is dark. We worship you past the barriers of time and space, and in your presence taste Paradise while yet on earth. We praise you for saving us from all that has held us back. You are the Source of life and laughter, of all things good, beautiful and true, and we will serve you to the end, and beyond.

References from The Urantia Book:

The enlightened worlds all recognize and worship the Universal Father, the eternal maker and infinite upholder of all creation. The will creatures of universe upon universe have embarked upon the long, long Paradise journey, the fascinating struggle of the eternal adventure of attaining God the Father. The transcendent goal of the children of time is to find the eternal God, to comprehend the divine nature, to recognize the Universal Father. God-knowing creatures have only one supreme ambition, just one consuming desire, and that is to become, as they are in their spheres, like him as he is in his Paradise perfection of personality and in his universal sphere of righteous supremacy. From the Universal Father who inhabits eternity there has gone forth the supreme mandate, "Be you perfect, even as I am perfect." In love and mercy the messengers of Paradise have carried this divine exhortation down through the ages and out through the universes, even to such lowly animal-origin creatures as the human races of Urantia. 1:0.3

The Universal Father never imposes any form of arbitrary recognition, formal worship, or slavish service upon the intelligent will creatures of the universes. The evolutionary inhabitants of the worlds of time and space must of themselves—in their own hearts—recognize, love, and voluntarily worship him. The Creator refuses to coerce or compel the submission of the spiritual free wills of his material creatures. The affectionate dedication of the human will to the doing of the Father's will is man's choicest gift to God; in fact, such a consecration of creature will constitutes man's only possible gift of true value to the Paradise Father. In God, man lives, moves, and has his being; there is nothing which man can give to God except this choosing to abide by the Father's will, and such decisions, effected by the intelligent will creatures of the universes, constitute the reality of that true worship which is so satisfying to the love-dominated nature of the Creator Father. 1:1.2

Notwithstanding that God is an eternal power, a majestic presence, a transcendent ideal, and a glorious spirit, though he is all these and infinitely more, nonetheless, he is truly and everlastingly a perfect Creator personality, a person who can “know and be known,” who can “love and be loved,” and one who can befriend you; while you can be known, as other humans have been known, as the friend of God. 1:5.8

After all, the greatest evidence of the goodness of God and the supreme reason for loving him is the indwelling gift of the Father—the Adjuster who so patiently awaits the hour when you both shall be eternally made one. Though you cannot find God by searching, if you will submit to the leading of the indwelling spirit, you will be unerringly guided, step by step, life by life, through universe upon universe, and age by age, until you finally stand in the presence of the Paradise personality of the Universal Father. 2:5.5

Your Father is not in hiding; he is not in arbitrary seclusion. He has mobilized the resources of divine wisdom in a never-ending effort to reveal himself to the children of his universal domains. There is an infinite grandeur and an inexpressible generosity connected with the majesty of his love which causes him to yearn for the association of every created being who can comprehend, love, or approach him; and it is, therefore, the limitations inherent in you, inseparable from your finite personality and material existence, that determine the time and place and circumstances in which you may achieve the goal of the journey of mortal ascension and stand in the presence of the Father at the center of all things. 5:1.2

The Father desires all his creatures to be in personal communion with him. He has on Paradise a place to receive all those whose survival status and spiritual nature make possible such attainment. Therefore settle in your philosophy now and forever: To each of you and to all of you, God is approachable, the Father is attainable, the way is open; the forces of divine love and the ways and means of divine administration are all interlocked in an effort to facilitate the advancement of every worthy intelligence of every universe to the Paradise presence of the Universal Father. 5:1.8

There is absolutely no self-request or other element of personal interest in true worship; you simply worship God for what you comprehend him to be. Worship asks nothing and expects nothing for the worshiper. you do not worship the Father because of anything you may derive from such veneration; you render such devotion and engage in such worship as a natural and spontaneous reaction to the recognition of the Father’s matchless personality and because of his lovable nature and adorable attributes. 5:3.3

And all these things are a part of the Universal Father. The Father is living love, and this life of the Father is in his Sons. And the spirit of the Father is in his Sons’ sons—mortal men. When all is said and done, the Father idea is still the highest human concept of God. 196:3.32