



UrantiaUniversity Institute Thought Leaders Forum

An online forum for exploring new directions and integrative thinking in science, religion, philosophy and human systems

Transcript of Video Presentation

By Claire and Angie Thurston

How Do We Do the Will of God
in This Moment of Our Planet's Evolution?

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00:30 Angie: Hi, I'm Angie and I'm here with my mom, Claire. And we are presenting together because the two of us are collaborating on an initiative around this question of what does it look like to do the will of God in this moment we're living on the planet Urantia. And particularly in light of the amount of turbulence and tumult that we're seeing on our world, I have been deeply invested in this question from a standpoint of encountering a lot of spiritual poverty, what feels like a kind of malnourishment and a real yearning for connection to spirit-reality, and the sense that the Urantia Book provides such a beautiful invitation to do that work, and that there's a real opportunity to make it super practical in the decades to come.

01:18 Claire: And I agree, the stakes are so high. I mean it's the lives of our children, the lives of our children's children, and all of us as brothers and sisters, the world that we are going to inhabit and bring forward.

01:31 Angie: So in terms of the world that we're building together, you've spent the last decade or so in leadership development, and I'm curious how you've been learning about the work that leaders can do, and the particular way that leadership development is moving as we think about the moment we're living through on Urantia.

01:52 Claire: Right, and the leadership development world is really moving towards certain teachings in the Urantia Book, mainly that it's better to focus on encouraging your strengths than fixing your weaknesses. I think this is a really positive development. At the same time, I feel like there's still a very hazy understanding of values, and of course if you're trying to find your strengths, a lot of that involves finding your values. So I think the Urantia Book really can help people access their values and learn what values are and what they are not.

02:27 Angie: That makes a lot of sense.

02:30 Claire: So, Angie, I know that you've explored the American religious landscape and spiritual landscape, and I really want to know what you see as the future of Urantia based on that.

02:41 Angie: Well, in terms of the moment we're in now and where it could move, what I've noticed is that there's this kind of amazing separation going on between the institutions that once held religion, and the places where people are actually living religiously. So to put that in more concrete terms, increasingly, especially in my generation, people are becoming unaffiliated, religiously. They're leaving the church, they're leaving the synagogues, etcetera.

And based on a personal investment in this on my own, because I really wanted a deep spiritual community, I started wondering, "Well, does that just mean everybody's no longer religious? That we've thrown it all out?" And I knew that wasn't true for my peers, even though they didn't affiliate with organized religion. So I started to wonder where are people having meaningful experiences of belonging? And where are they tapping into that 'something more' that grounds our existence? And it turned out that it was in the most unlikely places, and the one that I often cite is CrossFit, which many people have heard of, which is this crazy sort of evangelical fitness community.

03:50 Angie: And it became clear to me over time as I studied the people who were spending so much of their lives there, that they were experiencing extreme personal transformation, they were holding each other accountable, they were activating their creativity, they were finding a sense of purpose, they were even engaging in social change, and deepening this sense of community that otherwise they were starved for. And so, it turned out that that was a much broader landscape than I ever could have anticipated, and what it really calls into focus for me is that there's a moment of opportunity, but it's also a risky moment. Because on the one hand, the separation of religiousness from organized religion means there could be a real opening for a personal religious experience.

On the other hand, it could veer pretty far in the direction of spiritual narcissism, and the sense that if we're not connected to some of the teachings of ancient wisdom, that we can kind of go off on our own and lose track of what's important. So, I think the Urantia Book and its teachings are so critical right now in terms of what the next step of that future vision looks like. Which is why I think the work that we're trying to do together is exciting because it's a

real attempt to make practical some of the instructions the Urantia Book gives. So I'm curious from your perspective, what do you think some of those instructions are?

05:15 Claire: Well, again, I think the instructions in the Urantia Book are right there for us to find. They're not hidden, and they're spoken very plainly. And that is, if you can imagine an infinity symbol that the inner work that we do and the worship we do immediately flow into social service; that this is not a spirituality where you go hide in a cave, or as you referred to it as spiritual narcissism. As soon as we get the nourishment, we're supposed to share it with our fellows. And, in fact, they say let your good work shine, so that others can be drawn to the Father.

So that's really, really important in this time, especially because we're living in an age of what is largely the material comfort age that the Urantia Book describes in Paper 50, where we have incredible luxury at the same time as the kind of brutality that we see on the news every day. So it's even more important to leverage the strengths we have for the whole culture. So what do you think, Angie?

06:20 Angie: Well, one of the big pieces of Revelation that excites me about the Urantia Book right now, is that it locates the fragment of God living in us, in our minds. And what I've noticed is that in the midst of all of this move away from organized religion, there's a kind of moving towards some of the more contemplative strands of Christianity, and this idea of mindfulness that can supposedly be asecular and be appropriated increasingly in a lot of parts of our culture. Both of those strands in some way make an enemy of the mind, or at best, they sort of put the mind aside to achieve the kind of stillness.

07:00 Angie: And so what excites me about the teachings of the Urantia Book is that it really positions the mind as a valuable resource, and not only that, but the place where the fragment of God inside of us lives. And so when we think about the work of God inside of us being one of adjusting our thoughts, it really places a strong emphasis on the importance of thought, and of thinking that leads to decisions that leads to actions that are aligned with the will of God. So I think that's one of the most important instructions, as it were, in the book, that the idea of living religiously (that you might bring forward) has something to do with how you engage with God within us. So to me, that places a real exciting amount – or at least an invitation – on us as Urantia Book readers to do that work, and to model that work, and to share that with each other. So I'm curious, as you've done that in your own inner life, how have you found that impacting your life?

08:00 Claire: Well, I'll give an example where, by just trying to focus 20 minutes a day, what's resulted is more unpredictable. Where, for instance, I was in a leadership team meeting and my boss was demoralizing the team by saying that she didn't think they were accomplishing what they should, when I knew that really was incorrect. And before I knew it I was saying that to everybody in the room and there was that moment where I realized that I had done it, but the end result was that my boss didn't actually react negatively, and the team really, really

appreciated me encouraging them, especially when I saw, basically, a dishonest situation that could have really undermined them. So I think the thing, in my life anyway, is what it has done the most is to eradicate fear. But usually I look in hindsight and say, "Oh my God, did I do that? Did I say that?" And also that all of a sudden people, who didn't used to approach me, are approaching me. And so I just see all of that as a great sign.

09:09 Claire: But the main hallmark of it is that fear has left the equation. And I just want to add as a closing remark, that I really feel like I want to encourage all of you to support the truth lovers that you see in your life. When you see somebody who's shouldering a greater burden than someone else, to really step up and show your appreciation, or ask what you can do to help them. And that will encourage them to help you, because this is not an era where we're supposed to play it cool. We really need to help each other, and push our civilization and culture forward. So, Angie, how do you experience working with your Thought Adjuster, or attempting to do God's will?

09:51 Angie: Well, it's remarkable, given that I grew up as a Urantia Book reader, because it wasn't until 2013 that it finally dawned on me that if I was going to have a relationship with God, I needed to actually put time into that. And so I started taking five minutes a day – I literally set a microwave timer – to attempt to commune with my Thought Adjuster. And my experience is that, in the years since, there has been an increasing expansiveness and desire to share more of my inner life with God day by day. But you mentioned 20 minutes, and what's been really great, I think, about what we're working on is that we've both been taking 20 minutes out of every day to attempt to really get centered on God in our minds, and that by sharing that with each other, we've got to mutually inspire each other, and also then think about how that work can impact others.

10:47 Angie: And so for me one of the ways that's impacted others recently is that I started to realize, "Oh my goodness, I'm studying community but I don't actually have a living experience of community in the way that I know I want, and in the way that I think would make some progress toward the next stage of what we're hoping to see here on Urantia." And so I was like, "Okay, I have to start small and do something." So I put on a block party the other week, and brought a bunch of people together from my block, and now some people know each other's names and have the beginnings of relationships that they didn't before. And that experience has really made me think about the role in all of this of God the Supreme, because there's something about the experience of co-working and collaboration that comes up a lot for me. So I'm curious, in your wisdom, what do you think the God Supreme has to do with all of this?

11:44 Claire: Well, it's pretty interesting that God the Supreme offers us more or less a two for one deal, which is that when we try and act on our understanding of God's will, then we are also co-creating our soul as well as contributing some piece of God the Supreme. And if you think on a personal level, if you love someone, you also need them because you love them, and God the Supreme is really a manifestation of God needing us. So he needs our

unique personality in order to fulfill that aspect of God. And it just shows how much God really loves us, that he also needs us in that way. So Angie, what do you think are next steps in terms of how we should try and move forward, not only as an individual, but with the community?

12:41 Angie: Well, I would just love to see Urantia Book readers knowing each other and coming to be known for the work of inner spirit contacting. The book talks about those who are striving to be in communion with their Thought Adjusters as inner spirit contactors. And I think there is a lot of that already going on amongst Urantia Book readers, but it's a little bit of an untold story. And this is a moment where I feel that our culture is desperately in need of better stories, of inspiring stories, and an experience in participating with those stories.

So I would love to see us doing more of what I got to do with you, which is to really begin to share, okay, if living religiously is something personal, how do we learn from each other about that? How do we advance our personal religious lives through loving service to others? Seeing this as a kind of loving service – to actually get to know each other's religious lives and learn from them. So I would hope that as individuals, we increasingly adopt an attitude of choosing to share the inner life with God as much as possible, and as a community, we really honor that and name that as one of the primary activities that we take on. And I think, slowly but surely, with that as a nucleus, we might be able to really make some progress towards some of those future ages on Urantia we hope to see.

14:07 Claire: Right. But also I mean that I'm going to focus on the social side, which is, if you see somebody whom you feel is a truth lover, it's not the time to be cool or play it cool, it's really the time to step up and encourage that person, or ask if you can help them, because our culture needs it so desperately. So I see also the social side of new groups forming to, even just as Angie was talking about, to share stories together on a regular basis. So the Supreme needs us so much, and Angie, did you know the Supreme needs you?

14:44 Angie: Well Mom, did you know the Supreme needs you?

14:47 Together: And the Supreme needs you!