

MANUAL
FOR
GROUP DISCUSSION



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INTRODUCTION

Theosophy offers a vision of life that is purposeful and inspiring. It offers a philosophy that renders life intelligible, revealing that justice and love guide the process of evolution. It puts death in its rightful place as a recurring incident in an endless life, opening the gateway to a fuller and more radiant existence. It restores to the world the science of the spirit, teaching man to know the spirit as himself, and the mind and body as his servants. It illuminates the scriptures of all religions, unveiling their hidden meanings, justifying them at the bar of intelligence, as they are ever justified in the eyes of intuition.

Theosophy reveals the art of living. Its great truths can be practically and simply applied to all aspects of human endeavor and to the solution of human problems. By the wide exploration of Theosophy and the frank, impersonal investigation of its meanings in relation to living, we can discover the keys for understanding ourselves and others.

Individual study and reading, giving oneself time to digest and assimilate what one has read, are essential to a real grasp of the profound concepts of Theosophy. But much can be gained also through group study and discussion, for the interplay of several minds often throws light on what may have been a difficult subject for one individual, and the sharing of ideas can be mutually enriching.

Group discussion involves the discovery of truth through mutual effort. It is a method for exploring together valuable concepts and pathways of thought in their relation to living situations. It is a technique for arriving at understandings by proving their practical value in group action. Through group cooperation much that would remain difficult for the individual studying alone may become more readily grasped.

Theosophy is the accumulated knowledge of many great thinkers throughout history, and it has its practical applications to all aspects of living. Through sincere and open discussion, the many truths of Theosophy will become more vividly our own. We may come to know ourselves as we come to know our fellow man through the exchange of ideas, and through studying and thinking together. The following outline presents briefly and concisely the basic technique of this approach to the study of Theosophy through group discussion.

WHAT GROUP DISCUSSION IS

Group discussion is a popular method of adult education and is an exercise in cooperative thinking. It takes place when members of a group — usually under the direction of a leader — think and talk together on a selected topic. Individuals who participate in well-conducted discussions gain a widened range of knowledge and an increased ability for straight thinking and effective speaking. They also develop qualities of leadership and through wide acquaintance, lasting friendships.

In this type of discussion, there is a creative group process in operation. The contribution of each individual member is important. Expert and lay opinion alike have a part; all should participate in a spirit of cooperation. If approached with the proper attitude, the end result may be a group fusion of ideas, a harmonizing of differences, or a crystallization of thought.

Organized discussion of Theosophy can be an effective method for understanding and unraveling the tangle of events and forces that affect our lives. In general, three steps are involved in this process:

- 1) a recognition and understanding of the problem or situation;
- 2) an exploration of the basic tenets of Theosophy as possible clues to the solution;
- 3) an examination of the solution in terms of its practical value for living.

The first requisite for group discussion is a basic, binding group interest. There should be a tangible, common concern with the fundamentals of truth, and a mutual willingness to investigate those fundamentals in all directions. Only in this way can the principles of Theosophy be translated from the realm of intellectual comprehension to the ethics of daily life. If there is a group of people who believe in the possibility of the existence of truth, who have faith that by learning about themselves and the universe in which they live they can effect some improvement in living, then there is the basis of a Theosophical discussion group. All that is needed is that they be brought together.

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