

Social Meeting Basics

I. Some Recommendations:

A. Use the guidelines for other small-group-type meetings when appropriate:

1. Size: 7-12 people
2. Confidentiality: Protect it
3. Dealing with distractions
4. Child care: Provide it in a nearby room, though some children 12 and above can enjoy and participate in Social Meetings
5. Logistics: Establish your meeting location, host, hostess, leader, assistant leader, etc.
6. Etc.

B. Every Social Meeting has two possible topics on which participants can share:

1. How is it with Christ and me today?
2. My experience on a topic of the groups choosing

NOTE: STAY ON TOPIC! The leader needs to be diligent in re-directing the group when necessary. A spiritually uplifting Social Meeting can quickly become an entertaining, but spiritually irrelevant gathering without careful attention to this matter.

C. The following point is extremely important for the health and success of Social Meetings:

→ Good Social Meetings are the result of personal preparation during the week. What you put into the Social Meeting will largely determine what you get out of it.

Participants should be thinking throughout the week: What is it that I need to share in order to grow in Christ? What does God want me to say to help build up my fellow believers? What do I need the members of my Social Meeting to hold me accountable for or to pray for me for?

NOTE: Often new Social Meetings have great success right out of the bag. People are excited, enthusiasm runs high, and the sharing is spontaneous and inspirational. However, after several months when people have gotten to know one another, sharing can become stale UNLESS members take seriously their task to prepare for the meeting. Off-the-cuff sharing can carry the day at first, but long-term Social Meeting health calls for intentional preparation prior to the meeting.

- D. Consider a name other than Social Meeting (e.g., “Community Growth Group,” “Groups of Belonging,” etc.) as it no longer necessarily conveys what it should.
- E. Depending on the size of the group, Social Meetings generally last 30-60 minutes. The maximum time is up to you, but should be decided upon by the group and stuck to as much as possible.
- F. Prayer can be had at any time during the meeting, but if it doesn’t occur until the end, set aside 5-15 minutes for it, making certain that the prayer needs in the group are specifically addressed. Consider keeping a prayer journal to mark God’s work in your group.
- G. Avoid giving direct advice to someone who’s just shared a challenging situation (unless of course they ask for it). However, it can be fine for someone to tactfully share their own experience regarding a particular topic, especially if it can prove to be helpful to the person with the original problem without being preachy or patronizing.
- H. After gaining a bit of practice, open up your Social Meeting to guests. Social Meetings without guests are good. Social Meetings with guests are completely awesome and should be held with great regularity. (And interestingly enough, Social Meetings that never have guests...tend to die like any other small group ministry in the Adventist Church. ☹)
- I. Make repeatedly and abundantly clear to your Social Meeting leaders and Adventist participants the following guidelines for sharing in front of guests:
1. When guests are present, what you say *must be understandable* to the guests. If you use church or religious jargon, no problem—just explain it.
 2. Never talk down to a guest.
 3. Avoid talking directly to a guest; talk instead to the whole group.
 4. Avoid “going around the circle” to share; go randomly across the circle, so that the guest doesn’t feel awkward about being silent when it’s supposedly “their turn to share.”
 5. Be real. Don’t fake a great week with Christ if you didn’t have one. If you’re able to, do speak honestly of your hope in Jesus, even if your week was terrible.
 6. Many Social Meeting groups have found it helpful to read the opening reading (see below) at each meeting when there’s a new guest, or at least once a month, just to keep everyone on the same page.

7. If a church member needlessly drives off a guest, they are to be in deep hot water—DEEP, HOT water. Do not allow such a problem to go unaddressed.

J. Group leaders (or anyone deemed qualified to do so) should follow up with any spiritual decisions they sense in a Social Meeting that a guest is wanting to make. This can be done during a meeting, but may need to wait until a more private time can be found.

K. Above all, let God lead! On many, many occasions, I have seen the Holy Spirit work in Social Meetings in guests and members alike and have been amazed at where the discussion goes and the power of God's transformational love. Give God the reins, and see where He takes you!