

Dear Social Meeting Fans -

June 17, 2022

Over 30 people participated in the Social Meetings that took place last Sabbath, June 11! My great appreciation to each of you who came and took part in these important meetings.

After each of the Sabbaths during this test run period, I may take an opportunity to share some thoughts regarding Social Meetings. My hope is that this will prove helpful to us as we learn how to engage in the Social Meeting discipleship process.

After June 11's meetings, I have seven (the perfect number!) thoughts to share:

1. Honest, heartfelt sharing about where we are with Christ is rocket fuel for any good Social Meeting. One of the Social Meetings this last Sabbath was particularly excellent—not because of any soaring speeches someone made, but because of the honest victories and honest, deep needs that were freely expressed to the group. It was absolutely inspiring to see the group respond to other members' expressed needs! This is the heart and soul of healthy Social Meetings!

2. Silence is very often our friend. In day-to-day conversation, we are often nervous if there's silence. But in the Social Meeting, some silence is necessary. In fact, some attendees that are more reserved and shy will not speak *unless there's a long enough period of silence first*. They are sensitive to the needs of others, and don't want to risk "talking over" someone else or taking up time that someone else might need for sharing. Feel free to let there be some silence in your meetings.

3. Social Meeting participation is a skill that takes time to learn. Some of you that attended the Social Meetings this last Sabbath felt awkward in your sharing, and later shared with me that you just didn't feel comfortable speaking much in the meeting. As I said to you privately, I also now say to all of us: No problem! That's why we're doing this test run: so that we can learn the skills necessary to grow deeper and deeper in Christ through the basic tool of the Social Meeting. Be patient with yourself! Your comfort level will rise! Keep coming back, and good things will happen.

4. In Social Meeting, our personal sharing should focus on where we are at in our relationship with Christ. It's true that in the process of sharing my testimony or asking questions, I may talk about more run-of-the-mill things (what I did on my vacation, how my tomatoes are growing this season, etc.). But the Social Meeting is not a time for extended "common" discussion. It is instead an intentional act of discipleship, an intentional time to tell others what God has done in our lives, what we want Him to do in our lives, etc.

5. Old stories are good...but current stories are best! What has God done for you in the last week? What do you *wish* He'd done for you in the last week? The answers to these questions are perfect for sharing in the Social Meeting. Older stories? They can be helpful (particularly if someone in the meeting asks for help with a problem, and you have a story that can assist them—see #6 below). *But when it comes to your personal testimony, the Social Meeting is*

primarily about where you are, with God, currently. This focus on the present forces us to be real, and keeps us from coasting on yesterday's spiritual fumes.

6. Give lots of good advice, but only if it is specifically asked for. In day-to-day conversations outside of the Social Meeting, we will often offer advice to friends or acquaintances. This is a normal part of regular conversation. But the Social Meeting is different. There, we refrain from offering direct advice unless specifically requested to do so. This keeps others from feeling obligated to take unsolicited advice, and consequently makes everyone feel more comfortable sharing about their challenges without worrying that someone will attempt to "fix" them.

7. What you put into the Social Meeting is what you'll get out of it. There is no way around this truth—and I praise the Lord for that! Because this means that, if you will put in the effort required to both prepare in advance for the meeting and to share honestly and openly during the meeting, you will grow in Christ. So dive in! Challenge yourself to be open and honest in your sharing! We are all here for the same purpose: To grow in Christ, and through our own honest story, to help others do the same. And if you faithfully put in the time and effort required, you *will* grow through the Social Meeting.

I hope these observations are helpful. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Looking forward to seeing each of you this coming Sabbath!

Pastor Shane

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