

Our Group is Growing! oh my

Brothers our recent growth in numbers is exciting. Some have returned. Some new men have joined. More voices mean more input, more sharing and hopefully more value for all of us. The one constraint that has not changed is time. We have the same amount of time with more voices to be heard. It's important to make time for all to participate. Brad Miller recently sent out some wonderful instructions for group participation from a website called myenglishguru.com. And I am shamelessly borrowing from it: Here are some simple rules that will provide all of us the opportunity to engage:

Prepare: We always try to get you the study in advance. Read it! Pray about the topic. Open the Bible to consider the topic. Even if you do not prepare Thane's level of notes, simply taking the time to read it in advance will help keep your participation central to the topic.

What do you do when you receive the lesson? What might be helpful for others?

Listen: A few months ago, Lee gently observed that some of us seem more interested in making our point than responding to the current speaker. In other words, we weren't really interested in what others said, only our own input. As I've said before, my studies are often topics I'm struggling with. I come seeking your input. I already know what I think. We often quote Jesus, but we seem to skip how many times he asked questions. Of everyone. Jesus often drew out of people what they needed to hear by asking questions. Give others that same opportunity.

How can you become a better listener?

Don't dominate: Participation by person varies from week to week. As Roger recently said, sometimes we learn more the weeks we are the quietest. No one needs to respond to every comment. Make room for your brothers to share!

Examine your participation - are you leaving space for others?

Back up your points: If your opinion is worth sharing, it's worth supporting. I would suggest the Bible as a great starting point.

Do you throw out random thoughts or are you prepared to take it deeper?

When you disagree:

Never assume bad intent

Ask questions

Remain calm

Make your argument

Take notes: I don't every week, but most of the time I'm using the note pad on my phone. It helps me remember the times the conversation really resonated.

Relax: You are among friends who love you. Honest and transparent conversation does not happen if you are worrying about what others think.

Hopefully, next week someone will lead a real study: That's my story and I'm prepared to support it.

Our Group is Growing! oh my