

ESSENTIAL #4 – ENGAGEMENT GUIDELINES

1. Prepare yourself to contribute *and* to learn from others. Anticipate the Lord using them to bless you and you to bless them.

“Think of ways to encourage one another to outbursts of love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24).

2. As much as you can, use the Bible as your primary source when you speak or respond to what someone shares.

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that God’s people may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

3. Don’t worry about “doing a good job” or being polished when you share something. Instead, try to stay focused on *loving* us on Jesus’ behalf. As Paul said, “Do everything in an attempt to build others up.” That’s the best way to make sure your spiritual gifts get expressed as God intends.
4. Listen to what others say as though the Spirit of God, himself, may be trying to speak through them. You don’t have to “swallow whole” everything you hear.

“Do not stifle the Holy Spirit or scoff at supposed messages from God; test and evaluate everything that is said. Hold on to what is good” (1 Thessalonians 5:19-20).

5. If you disagree with someone, do so in a gracious, humble way. Sincerely seek to understand them, not just to *be* understood.

“Be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3).

6. Don’t just sit there— *respond* to what people share. Acknowledge and *appreciate* them. If it’s appropriate, offer some feedback, add an idea or ask a clarifying question.
7. Use periods of silence to pray and “listen” for the Spirit’s guidance. Resist the urge to rush in and fill the gaps.
8. When you sense the Spirit may be prompting you to contribute something, make sure the person talking before you is completely finished. Raise your hand or tactfully *ask* them if you’re not sure.
9. Be *personal* and share from your *heart*. It’s the real *you* that has the best chance of blessing somebody.
10. Be *brief* when you speak during our discussions, and try to address the whole group instead of dialoging or debating with just one other person. Restrict your comments to a few sentences at a time (about a minute) so you’re not monopolizing and so others feel free to add their ideas. Just because you *think* something doesn’t mean you have to *say* it all— at least not right *then*.
11. Encourage *others* to participate who tend to be more hesitant or thoughtful. Ask them questions; draw them out.

“Those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and we should treat with special honor the parts that appear to deserve it least...” (1 Corinthians 12:22-23).

12. Decision-making should usually include everyone who will be affected by the outcome. All proposals and opinions should be respectfully considered, then a vote taken. The issue is not resolved until a consensus is reached that everyone can support (even though a small minority might still hold a dissenting point of view).
13. Take the initiative to kindly *say something* if someone (or the group) seriously strays from one of these guidelines. If not you, *who*?