



52 Ways to Launch Your Weekly ABF, Part 1 – December 04

Essentials:

* **PREPARATION**: Have people prepare ahead of time for testimony, prayer, etc. Be prepared with all necessary props, handouts, pencils, posters, etc.

* **BRAINSTORM FOR CREATIVE IDEAS**: Talk with other ABF leaders, write the ideas down, then implement good ones within one month. Make a list of all possible creative approaches.

* **VARIETY, VARIETY, VARIETY**: Don't do the same thing two weeks in a row. Heighten the unpredictability. Without making newcomers feel uncomfortable, do things a little out of the ordinary. Keep away from ruts. (And don't assume that if something works once, it should become a group tradition, doing the same thing every week or month. That's a big mistake.)

1. **Use props**. Bring in a rake, paint can, or mixer to make a point about something. Be creative in your announcements.
2. Ask 2 or 3 of your dramatic people to **prepare a skit** on caregiving. Give them a month's advance notice. Then go for it!
3. Make hefty use of 3-5 minute prepared "**Turning Point**" testimonies. "Turning Point" testimonies are ones in which people tell of a critical turning point in their lives. It could be conversion, met spouse, major trial, failure, answered prayer, involvement in a ministry, evangelism effort, a need met, etc. Start with people who have reasonable speaking skills in front of the group and won't be nervous. This helps the more timid to gain confidence. Give plenty of advance notice (at least a week).
4. In prayer times, **use lists**. Don't just ask: "Well, anybody got any prayer requests?" List them out for people in creative ways. Examples:
 - ⌚ Challenges you are facing at work
 - ⌚ Opportunities you believe may be opening up for personal witness
 - ⌚ People in your neighborhood that need comfort, encouragement, direction
 - ⌚ Community concerns
 - ⌚ Specific character traits you want to see developed in yourself

And don't present the same list twice! Be creative. This avoids the common pitfall of "organ recitals."

5. In prayer times, **pray in different ways**. Sometimes silent, sometimes one person, sometimes in groups of six, sometimes in spontaneous sentence prayers in the whole group, sometimes by 2 or 3 prayer leaders. But plan these ahead! (Also, don't always feel the need to have a sharing time. Just go right into prayer and have them "share" their requests with God!)

6. **Use mixers**. There are books chock full of ideas for mixers. People should get to know one another in your group. We must avoid people talking to the same people every single week. It's fine to touch base with old friends, but we need occasional mixers to insure new people are getting involved.

7. Invite **someone to come and talk** to your group about something/anything for 5 minutes. Possibilities:

- ⌚ Pastors
- ⌚ Church leaders
- ⌚ Ministry leaders
- ⌚ Another ABF leader
- ⌚ A senior high student
- ⌚ A new Christian
- ⌚ An old and wise Christian

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- ⌚ Single mom/dad
- ⌚ Single person
- ⌚ Missionary
- ⌚ Be creative, find interesting people!

This gives people interesting information about new ministries, prayer needs, personal triumphs, individual testimonies, different ages & lifestyles, etc. Give them a strict time limit and emphasize it!

8. **Interview** couples or individuals with good questions. Do this regularly so people get to know each other. These must be arranged ahead of time.

- ⌚ Where do you live, work?
- ⌚ How do you meet one another? (if a couple)
- ⌚ At what time in your life did you become a Christian?
- ⌚ What's a recent highlight in your life (family, work, spiritual life, etc.)?
- ⌚ Tell us about your family
- ⌚ How long at Valley Church? In what are you involved?
- ⌚ What are some ways we can pray for you?

9. Do something creative with **food**. Make a certain point with the food you serve. (Example: Serve fresh fruit on a morning you are going to pray for the fruit of the Spirit in your lives.)

10. Get a **group song** led by a qualified song leader/guitarist. Perhaps have one rousing song be a theme song for your group for 6 months. Don't do a "dragger." Do an upbeat one.

11. Bring in a **CD or tape** with a favorite song. (Or ask people to bring in a favorite song.) Combine it with a brief word of why it means something to you.

12. Go outside for a **prayer walk**. Who said prayer needs to be in a circle on folding chairs. Or go outside for 5 minutes to praise God for a beautiful day. Be spontaneous occasionally! Imagine that.

13. Have a gifted **soloist** in your group share a powerful song of praise or testimony with a boom box or guitar.

14. Use **visual aids or audio aids**.

15. **Videotape a commercial** and ask, "What's wrong with this picture?" Then go into prayer.

16. Get a **video camera** and make a 5-minute ABF presentation. Send it to another ABF or a sick person in your group or a person who is moving away.

17. Invite in a **pastor to share his personal testimony** with the group. This simple step can really bond a pastor with people in your ABF.

18. Have may come one week with a **favorite Bible verse** ready to share...complete with a short testimony as to why it is meaningful to him or her.

19. Give out **cards "A", "B", "C",** and so on through **"Z"**. Then ask if anyone has anything to be thankful for that starts with this letter. (Don't ask with "A", just let it flow. Not everyone needs to share. By the way this concept is very biblical – see Psalm 34 and other psalms – an acrostic poem.)

20. Have everybody bring their **pictorial church directory** to your ABF. Sign them like high school yearbooks.

See January 2005 archive for ideas 21-52!

Submitted by: Quintin Stieff