



## 52 Ways to Launch Your Weekly ABF Part 2 - January 05

This Idea is a continuation of the Idea of the Month from December 2004, wherein "Ways" 1-20 were presented.

### Suggestions to Make Your ABF Fellowship Time Creative and Meaningful

21. Find a decent-to-good photographer in your ABF and have him/her take **pictures at an ABF social event**. Create a simple 5-minute slide presentation with a good Christian song for background.
22. Renew "**child dedication**." Have parents share from the heart what they desire God to do in the future in the lives of their children. Select a few parents ahead of time to share, and then open it up to any in the group. This activity is for parents of kids of all ages – even grown up kids!
23. Spend five minutes brainstorming about possible **social events** for the year. Use a poster or whiteboard. Put everything down. Don't evaluate...do that later!
24. Do a good old fashioned "**show and tell**." Have everybody bring an object from home or work that tells something about themselves. Then let them "**show and tell**." This can be a riot! Watch the time though! Or limit it to a few people each Sunday.
25. **Celebrate Thanksgiving** in a meaningful way with your ABF. Have members of your ABF join in a circle of chairs and complete the sentence: As I look back on the past year of my life, one of the things I'm most thankful for is \_\_\_\_\_. Encourage people to share from the heart. Model it for them with a few selected people first.
26. **Celebrate Christmas** with your ABF. Sing carols together. Share Scripture. Exchange cards with meaningful messages. Join together to send someone a gift from your ABF.
27. Take five minutes to **write a missionary**, a church planter, etc. Distribute index cards to everyone. Encourage them to write a simple greeting or Scripture verse. Throw them all in a big envelope and mail it to the friend far away.
28. Do the same as the above, but for a **student from the church** who is away at college. It will make his/her day! It's Christian love in action.
29. As a class **memorize a simple verse together**. Have fun with it. Do it over 3 weeks and commit it to memory. Have an energetic person lead the class in biblical calisthenics!
30. Ask 2 or 3 people to prepare a **short testimony** to share: "what our church means to me" or "what this ABF means to me." The apostle Paul opens nearly every letter with this kind of thanksgiving. He tells what the particular church means to him and why he is thanking God for them. It's so biblical...so healthy...so encouraging! Why don't we do it more?
31. Create "**case studies**" that relate to care-giving. Split into a few groups and give each group a different case study. Ask: "How could our ABF respond to this need?" Examples of needs:
  - Death of relative
  - Financial need
  - Marital separation
  - Hospitalization
  - Moving to another city
  - Loss of employment
32. Have every attender **share a "highlight"** or ("lowlight") of the week. Of course, people are free to "pass."
33. Buy a **huge card** for someone in your group in need of encouragement (get well, etc.) and have every person sign it. While you are signing, have a leader in the group give a little bit of info about your ABF (why we do this, how people can be involved in different areas – social, prayer, teaching, hosting, care-giving, etc.).
34. Give a "plug" for the **small group ministry**. Explain how it works and how it is a natural extension of the ABF – offering greater intimacy and greater opportunity for spiritual growth.

Share regularly the list of all small groups meeting at our church (available from the church office).

35. Create a videotape for a **sister church**. Include in the video serious and fun messages from different

members of the ABF. Include a humorous sketch involving some from your ABF. The sister church could view it on a Sunday evening or in small groups.

36. Invite the **church secretary** into your ABF and interview her. Ask how the office can help people in your

ABF and how we can help her.

37. **Celebrate birthdays!** Each month have a 5-minute mini-celebration of the birthdays in your group. Sing

“Happy Birthday” or create a kazoo band (auditions would be necessary of course). Ask each birthday person how we can pray for them in the coming year.

38. **Celebrate anniversaries**. Do the same sort of thing for anniversaries, but perhaps give a small gift or

remembrance from the group.

39. **Prepare for communion**. If communion will be occurring on the next Sunday (it’s usually on the first

Sunday of the month), suggest ways that people can spiritually prepare for communion in the coming week. Have people share (testimony or open to the group):

- Why communion is important/meaningful

- How he or she prepares to celebrate the Lord’s Supper

40. **Focus your prayer**. If a big event is about to happen at our church, then spend your whole time in small groups praying for the event or ministry. Examples: evangelistic event, launching of a new ministry, outreach, VBS, starting of AWANA.

41. Invite a pastor to come in and lead in a 10-15 minute **Concert of Prayer**. We would love to do so. It teaches our groups how to pray in groups and encourages prayer in church!

42. Have a **book-sharing day**. Everybody can bring in their favorite Christian book. They write out (on an index card) 2 or 3 sentences of “Why I like this book.” Spread out all the books on a table with the index cards. Invite people to “check out” the books from one another. (Note: have a time when everybody writes his/her name in the book. Also, have an agreed upon due date.)

43. Share a good **Christian pamphlet or tract**. For example: My Heart, Christ’s Home. Make copies available during the ABF.

44. Have a “**grandparent**” day. If your group is more mature, have grandparents share about their grandkids

– praises and prayer requests. (Remember to be sensitive to time and to feelings.) If your group is younger, invite a grandparent in to share for 5 minutes their wisdom.

45. **Cast the vision** (on a regular basis) of what your ABF is and can become. People need to be reminded of

the overall vision...a medium-sized community of people who can get to know one another, care for one another, grow in the Word together, encourage one another, and pray for one another.

That’s Christianity at its best.

46. One week, **create a banner** for a kids or your Sunday School class or AWANA. It’s kind of “crafts” in reverse. Kids always give us crafts. One week, we can give them one of ours.

47. Celebrate the **New Year!** Have different ones share from the past year that was significant in some way. Prayer together for the coming year.

48. Take a **group picture**. Have a theme for the picture if you like, or just play it straight. Have enough prints made for everyone in the ABF. Include names when you give the picture out so people can learn names.

49. **Celebrate other holidays in creative ways**. Mix together elements of fun, sharing, encouragement, testimony and prayer. Holidays would include: Valentine’s Day (be sensitive to singles), Groundhog Day, church birthday, Easter, Mother’s Day, Graduation, Memorial Day, Father’s Day, 4th of July, Labor Day and of course, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years. No two celebrations should be the same. Have different emphases and elements every time. Find excuses to celebrate.

50. Share **encouragement cards**. Have everyone in the group sign his/her name to 2 index cards, then place in the box. Send the box around and have everyone grab 2 names. Write an encouraging note to each of the two people you get. Even if you don’t know them...just write a favorite Scripture, and encouraging word. Either sign your name or leave it anonymous. Turn in

the cards, then have the leader hand out the cards to the appropriate people as they leave the ABF.

51. **Get a card** and write out a wonderful message of appreciation to the church custodian or building staff or to others who work at the church. Have everyone sign names. Send it with a box of homemade cookies. What a way to be positive Christian encouragement. Show them that we appreciate them so much!

52. **Worship together.** Have a well-planned time of worship that centers around a theme that exalts the Lord. Some of our small groups have done an excellent job of putting together a brief worship time together. Often, a worship time at a significant Christian celebration (i.e. Christmas, Good Friday, Easter) can be very meaningful for the group.

In a word:

Create Memories

Guess what? All you need is a little bit of advance brainstorming and planning!

**- Quitin Stieff, Senior Pastor of Valley Evangelical Free Church in West Des Moines, Iowa**