



Implementing the Five Purposes of the Church through ABFs - November 05

The Great Commission found in Matthew 28:18-20 says, "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" and the Great Commandment, found in Matthew 22: 37-39, says "And He said to him, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

A closer look at the Great Commission and the Great Commandment will result in discovering the five purposes of the church. In the Great Commission, making disciples is evangelism/missions, baptizing them is fellowship, and teaching them is discipleship. In the Great Commandment, Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind is worship, and love your neighbor as yourself is ministry. Our goal, then, is to create opportunities for people to participate in the five purposes of the church through Adult Bible Fellowships. In fact, ABFs are the foundational strategy in our local church for leading people to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and for building Great Commission and Great Commandment Christians through Bible study groups that engage people in evangelism, ministry, discipleship, fellowship, and worship.

Accordingly, ABFs should be encouraged to set goals and activities based on a balanced approach to the five purposes of the church as follows:

Worship -- Worship is bringing pleasure to God by expressing our love to Him. It is our objective to give priority to worship by providing resources to educate and inspire individual, family, and corporate worship experiences. Worship is normally thought of as the music portion of a worship service, but it is also much more. We can worship through prayer, by getting in a regular habit of reading the Bible, by obeying God, by giving our tithe, by building relationships with other Christians, by sharing our faith, and by serving others. ABFs should provide resources and encouragement to help us enhance our worship.

Discipleship – Discipleship is reproducing the character of Christ. It is our objective to develop passionate, mature, obedient believers to love, trust, and obey God and to teach them how to win and train others to do the same. Discipleship is a journey on the part of each individual Christian to become more and more Christ-like – to be able to look back and see that we are closer to Christ today than we used to be. ABFs provide opportunities for discipleship through systematic Bible study – whether it is a topical study or a study book of the Bible. ABFs are open groups -- meaning that anyone can attend on any given Sunday and be a part of a meaningful Bible study. In fact, open enrollment should be our policy – there are no requirements for ABF membership. We can and should enroll new members at any time.

Ministry -- Ministry is using our spiritual gifts to bless the church. It is our objective to involve each church member in ministry opportunities within the church by helping them to discover and understand their spiritual gifts. Each believer should be involved in ministry based on their spiritual gifts, heart's desires, abilities, personality, and experiences. ABFs should encourage members to find a place of service and their small groups can get involved in a church ministry as a group.

Evangelism/Missions – Evangelism is reaching those who are without Christ. It should be our objective to train and equip our members to win unbelievers for the Lord. No church can experience genuine kingdom growth without evangelism. ABFs should be our outreach and evangelism arm of the church. Each ABF is responsible for reaching out to guests who have attended their class as well as those prospective members, who have only attended a worship

service, that are assigned to their class. We should also ask ABFs and their small groups to get involved in missions projects.

Fellowship -- Fellowship is developing a dependence on God and each other. It is our objective to promote Biblical fellowship in the church by providing a hospitable atmosphere of openness and acceptance for our guests and members. Fellowship is not just casual conversation, socializing, food, and fun, but rather, real fellowship is experiencing life together. It includes unselfish loving, practical serving, sacrificial giving, sympathetic comforting, and all the "one another" commands found in the New Testament. ABFs and their small groups should be the very foundation of our real, Biblical fellowship.

In summary, ABFs are an integral part of our Biblical mandate and the mission of our church. Because of this, we should continue developing, enhancing, and strengthening ABFs and encouraging them to develop a balanced approach to implementing the five purposes of the church.

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