



The Launch of *The Hub* - December 05

Let me tell you about the ministry highlight of my year! It has been a long process to get to this point, so walk with me as I lead you through how we arrived at having a young adults' ABF called The Hub.

My Failure

I tried to start a young marrieds ABF back in the fall of 2003, but it died after only six months. There were 2 reasons why this ABF did not "succeed". First, I did everything wrong when it came to launching the ABF (I chose the leaders, the name, and the start date), and second, it was not good timing (we did not have many young marrieds at our church at that time).

One year later, during the fall of 2004, my Sr. Pastor and I started seriously talking about launching a new ABF. We considered a Young Empty Nesters ABF or another ABF for parents of young children. I prayed during the next few months for God's wisdom and leading on which ABF to start. Around this time I attended the ABF conference at Hope Church in Mason, OH. At the conference, I eagerly attended the workshop called "Starting an ABF from Scratch" led by Dave Guth and his ABF leadership team. The material was excellent and very practical. As soon as he started to explain the process of launching a new ABF, I knew that I had done everything wrong back in the fall of 2003! I learned a lot from this workshop and I kept those lessons in my mind over the next few months.

A New Opportunity

One day in the spring of 2005 I was talking with my Sr. Pastor about our young marrieds small group and how we've grown. I told him that there were many young marrieds and singles that had started coming to our church and he said, "Well, there's your new ABF right there!" So, I began to look more seriously at starting a young adults' ABF. I asked the young married couples that I knew if they would be interested in being part of an ABF if one was to be offered. There was some interest. I would often tell young couples and singles that we were thinking of starting a group for them just to get them interested in the possibility. I then talked to our elders and mentioned that I was thinking about starting a young adults' ABF and mentioned the need for a good leader. Our chairmen mentioned the names of a young couple, Tony and Jenny, who he knew were strong Christians and good leaders. I approached them about the idea of leading a young adults' ABF and asked them to pray about this opportunity. They got back with me in the late spring and said they were interested. Along the way I had been providing them with information about ABFs and our philosophy of ABFs here at The Chapel. Once they were ready to lead the ABF, I provided them with a list of names for potential ABF members and leadership team members. My wife and I met with them over lunch and answered more questions about the launch of this new venture. I stressed over and over again to them that there must be a leadership team in place before we launched. I was determined, with God's leading, to put the right ABF model in place before we even got started.

Building the Leadership Team

Tony and Jenny made some calls to the recommended people about being part of the leadership team for this new ABF. The first meeting was held on July 31 after church, and they talked to the group about this new idea and the different roles that were available for them to fill. They also sketched out a rough mission statement and decided who The ABF would target. By the end of the week the three couples who were part of that meeting signed on to fill the Social leader, Integration (Assimilation), and Prayer/Care roles! Not too long after that another couple was approached about being the Outreach leaders and they joined the team. At the next meeting on August 12th, the mission statement was finalized and each team member submitted their choices for a name from the list that was e-mailed out to the team. We tried to pick a name that reflected our target audience and captured the mission of our ABF. Several names were discussed and

finally The Hub was chosen. This is The Hub's mission statement:

The Hub exists to be a Christ-centered community that serves God by providing a home for young singles and couples to experience God through Biblical teaching, prayer, deep friendships, social activities, and outreach.

Also, at this meeting an extensive promotion plan was drawn up. This included dividing the names of potential members between the leadership team. Each team member was to call their assigned people and invite them to The Hub for the launch date of September 18. One team member, who is an artist, was given the duty of coming up with a logo for The Hub. (It is three colors with the tag line: "THE HUB: NOW CONECTING YOUNG SINGIES & COUPLES WITH CHRIST")

Upon completion of the logo a post card was sent out to potential members, church bulletin announcements were made, t-shirts were designed and worn to church and the church picnic, and professionally designed signs were hung up around the church. All of this took place about 3 weeks before The Hub even launched. At the last leadership team meeting before the launch, final details were hammered out. Leadership team roles were defined more carefully, each leader shared ideas for the next few months, socials were put on the calendar, the first meeting was planned, and of course there was continued prayer. The team also chose a teacher, conversed with him about the teaching time, and gave input on what they'd like to have taught. This whole time there was an excitement around the church about The Hub. Older people were telling younger people about this new group and people were impressed by the signs and the concept. Well, The Hub launched on Sunday, September 18th with 40 people in attendance! God really blessed and it was evident that The Hub was really meeting a need. I think we were all surprised by the turnout! Since then the average attendance has been 34 people! There's been a good mix of singles, young marrieds, and young marrieds with kids each week. There is usually one informal social per week in someone's home like a game night, to give people a chance to connect. There are more organized socials every few weeks to connect as a group.

Here's what I've learned in this process:

1. God's timing is the best timing; this whole process just seemed to all fit together to meet a real need in our church and community.
2. "...God has placed the members, each of them, in the body, just as He desired" 1 Corinthians 12:18. It has been so neat to see how the people on the leadership team are in a role that fits their gifts and how God is using them.
3. Forming a leadership team before the ABF even launches is crucial. The community, or lack thereof, on the leadership team will be reflected in the ABF as a whole. That's why forming a tight knit team is so important for the survival of the ABF.
4. As a Pastor, seeing people carry out the ministry without needing me to play a vital role is so freeing, exciting, and Biblical! This has been the greatest joy in this whole process. From the beginning I gave the leadership team some guidelines for the ABF, but said the rest is up to you. This allowed them to use their gifts and creativity to dream big for God, within some definite boundaries. The liberating feeling of watching this ministry thrive on its own is fantastic.

All in all, I'm thankful to the Lord for guiding us through this process over the last 2 years and for using this leadership team to connect young couples and singles with Christ. I'm also thankful for the training I received from the ABF conference and that I've seen the principles work in this church. In my mind this story is a great example of 2 Timothy 2:2.

- Blair Hayward, Pastor of Adult Ministries at The Chapel in St. Joseph, Michigan