



How To Start an ABF From Scratch - February 05

How do you start anything from scratch? I remember growing up and enjoying my mom's homemade pie; especially the pie crust, made from scratch, of course. She used basic ingredients and it required a little extra time to prepare. I think she also had to know some of those baking secrets to get that crust to flake just right. I can just taste it now.

So what is involved with "starting an ABF from scratch"? I don't think it's too far off my mom's homemade pie. To start out, it's important to know what the end result looks like. If you don't know what a good pie looks and tastes like, you'll have a difficult time duplicating it. The same is true of an ABF community. Educate yourself in the end result. What does a thriving ABF look like in action? Answer that question and you will be well on your way.

Basic ingredients are essential in baking, just as in starting and maintaining an ABF. As I reflect back to our beginnings when we formed our leadership team some of the basic ingredients that we relied on were:

- First, the concept of using a team approach to develop and manage our group life. Discovering what specific gifts people can exercise in our group has been exciting to see take place. We began to experience community life as a leadership team before our group had even formally met!
- Second, was visioning and dreaming as a leadership team, what our ABF was all about, what specific teaching we wanted to have and what type of socials we wanted to experience were all apart of what made us unique as a people group. Our particular group was a parent's of teenagers ABF, so we concentrated on those topics and socials that we could identify with. This is where you develop your group identity.
- Third, was launching the ABF with momentum and a positive experience so those that come would want to come back and experience that feeling of being with others and eventually experiencing life together. We accomplished the first part of that by having a three stop progressive dinner. First stop appetizers, second stop main course and third stop everyone meets at the church for desert. Each stop was with a different group of people in a host home to give the maximum opportunity to connect with others. Then at the church the leader shared the schedule of teaching and what we could look forward at our first meeting and beyond. We concluded the evening with just letting others have time to connect with one another and enjoy some great deserts. Food is a time tested connecting tool, use it to your full advantage.
- Fourth, was developing early on opportunities for those who wanted to, to get involved with a small group. These groups were made up of couples and single parents who were in our ABF. This gives the greatest connection that you can possibly experience in the church. The relationships that have formed in the two small groups in our ABF are some of the strongest in our group. Many of these individuals have taken it to the next level to use their gifts in our ABF and also in the church.
- Fifth, has been looking outward in how we can serve one another as the body of Christ. We have done several service projects where we served the body. One in particular was sending care packages to our college students. In addition, we desire to look outside our church as well; what outreach potential we have to bring others that haven't experienced a spiritual connection into an environment that can foster that personal relationship with their creator.

As I ponder the many experiences that my wife and I have had in the local church the ABF model in action has allowed those that have embraced it a spiritual growth and connection with others that we have not seen in other contexts. I encourage you to explore the ABF philosophy for yourself.

Just a few reminders as you start off on this venture.

Focus on the basic ingredients:

- Forming a team with people you can work and laugh with
- Doing the basic elements of ABF life and keeping it simple
Fellowship + Food + Teaching + Laughing = Good Time
- Tapping into resources and creativity that give you that little edge, that flakey crust that people can identify with and want to be a part of.

Did I say that you need to laugh, a lot? This is an adult youth group, says Steve Lizzio, our Pastor of Adult Ministries. So HAVE FUN!!!!!!

There's nothing like being a part of the body of Christ where ordinary people are growing, serving, and loving each other. The ABF model promotes the body life of the church. Get on board and start one today, what are you waiting for?

For more information on starting an ABF; order the CD "How to start an ABF from scratch" by Dave Guth & Leadership Team from the 2004 ABF Conference at Hope Church in Mason, Ohio. Request a conference workshop order form by emailing tapes@hope-church.org. Article by: David Guth - ABF leader of the "GPS" (parents of teens) community at Hope Church.

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