



### **Six Steps to Building a College Ministry ... and ABFs! (Part 2 of 2) - September 05**

Steve Shadrach, a veteran of college campus ministry has written “The Fuel and the Flame,” a book about how to build a strong campus ministry with college students. As I read the book, it became more and more obvious that many of his principles apply to building groups of all ages and stages of life. I particularly appreciated his commitment to personal disciple-making. In chapter 5, on “Plot out your strategy,” he shares his six steps to building a ministry. This article includes steps four through Six. I have included ABF application thoughts for each. These ideas might cause some to rethink how to look at building and sustaining an ABF ministry for the long haul.

#### **Step #4: Prepare for the Stages of Ministry (within a year)**

In campus ministry Shadrach identifies three unique stages. First, the Investigation stage occurs in August and September as leadership determines the location of the students and their various involvements. Second, is the Penetration stage which emphasizes meeting students, building relationships, and sharing the gospel message. Third, is the Concentration stage when new believers are cared for and built up in the faith.

Is there a reason ABFs cannot find some appropriate applications? Many campus discipleship guru graduates move away from college life and settle into a career and find a church to join. Most are extremely disappointed over the lack of evangelism and discipleship happening in churches today. Of course in the “real world” folks are busy with advancing careers, ongoing bills, maintaining property and “stuff”, building a family life and navigating kid commitments along with being involved in the church (and ABF!). This DOES NOT excuse the church from being involved in evangelism and discipleship, however, it just means more intentionality is needed.

ABF leadership can help their group members use these stages when building relationships. As the fall approaches vacations are winding down, kids start back to school, organized hobbies start up again and people are settling into new routines. As a result, ABF group members are getting to know new people or getting re-acquainted with others. They could also be building friendships with new neighbors, new workmates or parents on their kid’s sports teams. This is all a part of the investigative stage, finding out where people are. The penetration stage initiates as relationships develop over time, group members’ sense specific people who might be open to the gospel. ABF members should look for ways of showing the love of Christ, doing acts of kindness and when appropriate, initiate “spiritual” conversations. There also might be “next step” opportunities to invite people to a church service, an ABF group meeting, an outreach event, or even begin a one-on-one discipleship Bible study. All of these opportunities could be examples of the concentration stage for campus ministries. It is in this stage that we intentionally come along side people and help them on their spiritual journey.

#### **Step #5: Decide which Students to Target**

Figure out the parameters of all the different “people groups” on campus such as dorm floors, Greek chapters, clubs and organizations, athletic teams, etc. Begin to pray over each group. List the names of individuals whom you currently know. Some ministries divide the names into influential, interested, and isolated categories. By doing this, they attempt to target the students who have the broadest network of relationships in order to impact the maximum number of people on the campus. The influential are “mainstream” students who get involved and usually attract people. The interested are “midstream” students who were never big fish in high school but are now trying to find a place to plug-in. The isolated are “out of the mainstream” students who live rather secluded lives—away from the influential and interested.

A lot of campus ministries may subconsciously gravitate toward the interested and isolated

students, because they appear less intimidating and are often looking for a spiritual refuge while at college. As needy as these students are, many times they do not represent the heart of the campus. The movers and shakers are the people who influence which direction a campus is going. Shadrach encourages you to minister to everyone who comes into your path but to purposely search for and choose those specific students you believe God wants you to reach in order to have maximum impact on your campus.

How could this apply to ABFs in churches? There are at least two ways it could work. One way would be to conduct a methodical, prayerful search for those who are influential in the church who could be assets to your ABF and then carefully and prayerfully find ways to attract them. A second application would be to look within your personal sphere of influence for potentially influential people who might not know Christ. You would then intentionally target them with the gospel. You might set up a one-on-one Bible study. There are many effective Bible study tools that could be used for this process. Check out the Destined material ([www.lifebuildersnet.org](http://www.lifebuildersnet.org)) from Campus Crusade, Operation Timothy ([www.cbmc.com](http://www.cbmc.com)) or The Purpose Driven Life by Rick Warren.

ABF leadership should be continually looking for potentially influential people to build upon and disciple! Focusing only on the interested and isolated people (as described above) reduces the possibility for substantial growth since these people often lack purpose and direction. Some might think that this encourages leaders to be prejudiced or show favoritism in a way. Actually, this is exactly what the Apostle Paul was telling Timothy, his disciple, in II Timothy 2:2. Paul says, "And the things you have heard from me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others." Paul knew Timothy's time was limited. He encouraged him to look for people with certain character traits (reliable) and abilities (could teach others). ABF leaders must also concentrate on developing new leaders that exhibit leadership potential whether it is teaching, a prayer ministry coordinator or an upcoming ABF Leader, etc.

#### **Step #6: Know What It Is You're Seeking to Produce**

Before we actually implement our ministry, we need to fully understand the ultimate goal. It's fine to know the seasons and stages of ministry, but we need to consider how the students will be equipped when we have done our work with them and they pass along to their next assignment. ABFs should look to the church leadership for the qualification and descriptions of a mature believer. Many churches use Rick Warren's "baseball diamond" or something similar to map the desired path of a growing, maturing disciple of Christ. Keeping the "goal" or "product" before your ABF leadership will give direction and purpose to a ministry that can easily lose focus in the marathon of life and ministry.

#### **Summary and Questions**

(Step 4 Questions) Are your ABF leaders being purposeful in building relationships with non-believers? Is your leadership training your group members to be sharing their faith and guiding people into a relationship with Christ? Are you training your group members how to lead investigative Bible studies with seekers and/or how to disciple new believers in one-on-one or small group settings?

(Step 5 Questions) Who are the influencers in your ABF? Are they being utilized? If not, how could they? Do you know of other influencers (potential for your ABF) within the church or within your sphere of influence that you could become more intentional with? Could it be an unbeliever that you ask to join you in a short-term Bible study?

(Step 6 Questions) If your church has a suggested "diamond" of some kind does your leadership team review it periodically? Could your teaching series and other ministries assist your group members in their spiritual and ministry growth in a more intentional way? If your church does not have a tool like this, could you talk to your pastor about some ideas your ABF could strive for in building up spiritually growing disciples of Jesus?

**- Based off of a book by Steve Shadrach and ABF application comments from Steve Lizzio**