



I Will Implement ABFs Where Ever God Leads! - June/July 06

Have you ever seen someone trained in ministry only to move away? On the other side of the coin, have you ever had a need that God provided an unlooked for solution at just the right time? I would like to share an encouraging testimony of how God sovereignly worked within the Body of Christ, with respect to ABF-style ministry in my church.

I'm in the military, and though military members seem to move every two or three years, I was in my last church in Florida for seven years. The last year and a half before moving I was the ABF director in my large evangelical church. My last church had many different adult groups, ranging from traditional adult Sunday schools to "pure" ABFs. In taking over as ABF director, I had tremendous support from my Pastor and mentor. The church even paid for us to travel together to the 2004 ABF conference. As a result, this led to a beginning revitalization of the church ABF ministry. Additionally, I was a part of a team charged with mapping out the process for how the church helped members grow to maturity in Christ. ABFs were recognized as one of the three central environments supporting this process. So as you can see, God was actively using my church's ABF ministry. And then I moved away to Colorado.

At the same time I was learning about ABF ministry, God was moving in my future church. God was working in Grace Bible Church in a number of ways. First, the church was planting another church in the local area. This involved sending out (sacrificing) key members and leaders from Grace to serve in the new church plant. At the same time Grace leadership recognized an important need for members to not only be taught the truth but also to put God's Word into practice in iron sharpening iron relationships. Leadership and many members had a desire for a more relational and application-oriented Adult Sunday School class. Thus the way for ABF-style ministry was prepared. So what has happened?

The Pastor and I hit it off right away. He recognized that the ABF philosophy was the right fit for Grace Bible. Two new fellowship groups (read ABFs) had recently started and the Pastor was teaching the one my wife and I joined. In discussing the ABF concept, right off the bat, the Pastor recognized the importance of having a class leader. This was because he wanted fellowship group leadership to multiply and not be dependent on one person. Setting the example for serving together, the pastor and our class leader are friends; they jog together and are growing ministry partners. We also chose a group name, Saints Unlimited. This may sound strange, but would you believe I'm truly excited about the name? First, the name is based on a God-sized vision verse: Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Second, it also reflects the uncommon character of the group, which is not life-stage segregated--we have everyone from young singles to old marrieds!

The Value of the Leadership Team

Probably the most significant point is that we are beginning to recognize the potential of multiplying ministry through a leadership team. Though the group is still young, we have had one leadership team meeting and it was awesome! Not only did we schedule out our socials, but we selected our next Bible study according to the group needs. All of this resulted from group effort! Finally, as a leadership team action item, I am excited to be receiving the visitor cards that are taken up in the worship service and inviting those visitors to our fellowship group socials. In inviting people to one social I have already had the opportunity to pray with someone in crisis as well as develop a friendship with a new couple! Do you think I will have a problem calling all those people a second or fifth time to invite them to our socials? I look forward to calling them--who knows what God will do! So what might you take away from this testimony?

First, as you have perhaps heard before, the class leader is a key position. Develop and use class leaders so we aren't depending solely on the teacher for ministry leadership. Also,

leadership teams are key to multiplying ministry and discipling leaders in an ABF. ABFs are a great tool for evangelizing and discipling. Have you considered the ways your ABF can contribute to your church fulfilling the Great Commission? And finally, keep investing in the lives of others-- you never know how God will multiply that investment to the glory of God into the lives of people around the country or even the world!

- Mike Beck, Grace Bible Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado