



## Where are you going? – February 08



Some of the fondest memories my wife and I have of raising our four children came out of summer family trips to Colorado. Each July we would load up our van with the kids and hitch-up a trailer full of mountain bikes for the two-day trek to the Rocky Mountains. A big part of the excitement of taking any trip is in the anticipation and the planning. Before each trip, I would pick up a *Trip-Tik* from AAA of Texas. This handy little guide would provide me with all the route information I needed to get us there and back. The *Trip-Tik* proved to be an invaluable tool for knowing *how* to get to where we were going. But before I needed to know *how* to get to where we were going, I first needed to know *where* we were going.

That may sound like a statement of the obvious. However, the obvious is often not clearly defined and is typically left to speculation. When it comes to leading our Adult Bible Fellowships (ABF's) how many of us really know and have clearly defined *where* we are going? We may know *how* to get to where we are going. The question is, "Do we really know *where* we are going?"

Consider the following quote from the book *When Moses Meets Aaron*. "**Knowing where you are going is much more important than knowing how you will get there.**"<sup>1</sup> Co-authors, Gil Rendle and Susan Beaumont, discuss *The Importance of Outcomes* in a chapter with the same title. Their point is that leadership must be crystal clear on *where* they are going. It is not enough that leaders merely have an idea of where they are going, but that they must be able to clearly articulate where they are going, especially to those following their leadership. Only then are all involved able to determine *how* to get to where they are going.

The book suggests that knowing where you are going requires carefully answering three questions:

1. *Who are you?*
2. *What has God called you to do?*
3. *Who is your neighbor?*<sup>2</sup>

What relevance is there in seeking to answer these three questions for your ABF's? First of all, *Who are you?* As an ABF, who are you? Is there a clear understanding among you and everyone involved, especially the church leadership, as to the mission and vision of your ABF ministry and how it fits within the overall mission and vision of the church? Is it crystal clear to your congregation what ABF's are and where they fit within the overall strategic plan of your particular church. Second, *What has God called you to do?* Answering this question will answer the "Where are you going?" question. Answering this question is much like the visioning piece in strategic planning. It involves painting the picture of a preferable future. It answers the question of what it is that you are trying to accomplish in your ABF's? In WWII General George Patton understood the importance of the concept of mission to the point that he made sure everyone down to the lowest rank could state the mission. He made sure that everyone under his command was on board with what it was that they were trying to accomplish. Third, *Who is your neighbor?* Specifically, what is the unique environment of your particular church, both within and without? Within your ABF's, who is it that you are both ministering with as well as ministering to? Answering this question will answer the "How are you going to get to where you are going?" question. Who you have to work with as well as who you are trying to reach will determine *how* you are going to get to where you are going with them. It is important to remember that one size does not fit all. Even among the various ABF's within your church there are unique distinctions and characteristics of each mid-size community. Each ABF takes on an identity all its own.

<sup>1</sup> Gil Rendle & Susan Beaumont, *When Moses Meets Aaron*, The Alban Institute, (Herndon, VA.:2007), page 46.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

As leaders of our ABF's, these are three questions we would do well not only to answer one time, but to revisit them and to evaluate our answers to them on a continuing basis. Like my trips to Colorado, it was not enough to know **where** I was going or **how** I was going to get there. Throughout the trip I needed to constantly refer to my *Trip-Tik* to make sure I was staying on course.

Leading our ABF's requires all manner of attention to the all-important elements of teaching, community, pastoral care, outreach and service. These are the elements of **how** we are going to get to where we are going with our ABF's. But the overall question first needing to be answered is, **Where** are we going with our ABF's? What is it that we are trying to accomplish? What does the desired outcome look like? Once we have clearly defined the answer to that question and we are able to articulate it to others, we can then know **where** it is that we are going with our ABF's and identify **how** we are going to get to where we are going.

Are we there, yet?

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