



Removing ministry clutter through ABFs – April 08



Recently, our staff has been reading *Simple Church* by Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger. This book challenges all of us to look closely at how we define discipleship and what processes do we embrace to make disciples. A worthy read for any of us!

What caught my attention was a quote near the end of the book. “And this clutter foster mediocrity” (p. 235). Our teams had already been thinking about the clutter in our programming. This sentence struck a chord!

When I think of the power of community in the ABF and how that power can be harnessed for the church, excitement builds! In a recent conversation with Steve Lizzio (Hope Church) and Brandon Schaefer (Southland, Lexington, KY) the idea of “synergy” came up. That idea is that the ABF works in concert with what, in many of our churches, is a myriad of separate ministries. Those separate ministries dissipate the energy in the church. But, working together, how much more we could accomplish!

We have worked for several years to do much shepherding/pastoral care through the ABF. People were cared for, on the front lines, when facing family crisis (e.g. job loss, new birth, death, injury, hospitalization, etc.), or in need of special care (financial care, housing, or transportation). For many of us the ABF serves in this way. We seek to develop smaller groups from the ABF, using the ABF as a “Bridge” to deeper community in comparison to the weekly worship service.

We added some new wrinkles! This year, the ABF ministry is partnering with the Family Ministry to do “Santa’s Workshop” a ministry to over 250 families in our area who are in need of a “little extra” at Christmas. The ABF ministry partners with our Mission’s Ministry to host missionaries during our annual Mission Fair which invites over 60 missionary groups to attend. Our ABF partners with our Outreach Ministries to meet particular needs in our community, whether it be building Habitat houses, or digging cisterns for homeowners. We partnered with Worship Ministries to provide “extras” for a recent production.

Just this month, we were approach by a team from Northern Kentucky University asking to do an evaluation for us as a part of a MBA project. Our choice was to evaluate how well we communicate and move people from the weekend worship services into smaller groups. The movement from Worship to Smaller Group crosses several staff ministry leaders. This experience allowed us a much needed “check-up” but also allowed us to develop a working relationship with NKU. We hope the tool developed will be helpful in other evaluations we are seeking to remove clutter.

We have a lot of study and conversation ahead from *Simple Church*, but our first step was to begin to remove clutter from our programming in the ABF. Communication is getting better. This will allow us to have the tougher conversation along the way.

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