



## ABF Teacher Shoes – August 08



As Moses experienced the call of God at the burning bush in Exodus 3, the Lord told him, “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” You are probably familiar with the excuse-making, arm-twisting discussion that followed. But eventually, the sandals went back on. They were no longer sandals destined for the plains of Midian. Those sandals were now to carry Moses as he led the people of God out of Egypt. Suddenly those sandals had become part of a sacred call!

The shoes of an ABF teacher are no less significant! They are part of a sacred call as well. Those who fill these shoes have to lead people to an encounter, in which the eternal word of God and the lives of listeners collide. Inside those shoes are the feet of people, whose responsibility it is to lead others to a place where they can see the living God, see themselves, and see our culture more clearly. They are to lead people to faith in Christ and obedience to all that He has commanded.

In light of those weighty responsibilities, the people that fill those shoes need to pursue excellence! In light of those weighty responsibilities, those who mentor and equip ABF teachers need to stimulate excellence!

Here are three ideas that can help to ensure that you and the ABF teachers in your church pursue excellence.

1. Recognize that ***not everyone should fill those shoes!*** If you go to a shoe store, you don't just grab the first pair of shoes that look nice and walk out. Size and fit are important!

The people who should fill the shoes of an ABF teacher have four distinguishing characteristics. They must be people whose ***character*** reflects a growing Christ-likeness. They must possess a level of ***competence*** in being able to communicate biblical truth. They must have a ***chemistry*** that matches that of your church's vision, values, and mission. They must have an increasing ***knowledge*** of Scripture. Sacrifice any of these and you will likely eventually have to deal with problems!

2. Realize that ***those shoes seem to naturally gravitate towards comfortable, familiar paths.*** I love to walk around our neighborhood with my wife. I am finding that we tend to generally walk the same route, which, by the way, does not include the steep road leading to the park!

In contrast, ABF teachers wearing shoes that are pursuing excellence are seeking to stretch, grow, and learn. They will make their way to conferences and seminars, where they are challenged to think differently or communicate better. Those, who fill these shoes, will be constantly reading something, constantly listening to someone. They will seek input from those, who also wear the shoes of a teacher of the precious word of God. In short, they will constantly be asking themselves how they, with the empowerment of the Spirit of God, can do an even better job of “teaching others to obey all that Christ has commanded.”

3. Understand that ***a tape measure can help those shoes to stretch***. Our daughter is one of the tallest in her class. She is growing quickly. Every time we replace a pair of worn out shoes, her shoe size has changed!

In an ABF ministry, those willing to take measurements to see if they are growing seem to be the ones, who are becoming more fruitful in their ministries. Though it sounds threatening, they will periodically invite others to critique their teaching. At the end of a teaching series, they may distribute an evaluation form to the entire class, inviting their input. Recording their teaching and listening to the recording (Ouch! That's painful!) is not taboo. These people realize that the tape measure readings on their teaching not only give them an indication of growth, but they can also stimulate further growth!

**Steve Kern** is associate pastor of spiritual growth at Wooster Grace Brethren Church in Wooster, Ohio. Steve will be at the upcoming ABF Conference. Join him and others to discuss more about this subject in the workshop entitled "*Stimulating Excellence and Accountability with ABF Teachers.*"