

Guidelines for Starting a BAR

Considerations:

1. Building authentic relationships is the intention of a **BAR**. This is not a time for heavy teaching, nor simply a social snack time. The structure and questions for each gathering are geared toward building a deeper connection in each of the married couples and uniting the couples to a community of others.
2. In the hope of building a closer community, it is best for the participants to be somewhat in a close geographic location.
3. By welcoming all couples at different stages in their marriage, from engaged to retired, a beautiful blending of experience and sharing will result in an enriched **BAR**.
4. This program was originally created as a tool for evangelization. Therefore, encourage your attendees to invite others and remain charitable and open to those who show up. Being friendly and non-threatening goes a long way in leading others to Christ.

Leadership:

1. The “leaders” of the **BAR** should be a married couple. It doesn’t matter the length of their marriage. All that’s needed is a willingness to steer a group through the meetings and a friendliness that welcomes others.
2. It would also be advisable to have a basic skill of working with computers and maneuvering websites.

Location:

1. A Home: Meeting in different couple’s houses makes it non-threatening to those who are not regular church attenders and can be more comfortable all around. The draw back to a home location is the pressure it puts on the host and the inconsistency if the house changes each month.
2. The Church: Meeting at the church provides a good central location that most couples are used to attending. There is less pressure for a host to clean and set up. The draw back of a church is that the **BAR** may become just another “church program” that only attracts parishioners. (This may be acceptable if evangelization is not a key focus) The other issue with a church location is the scheduling of the rooms.
3. Another Public Location: Meeting in other gathering spaces, such as a Moose Lodge or apartment community center, is another option that could tend to be less threatening and easier for a host; however, the struggle will be in the area of scheduling and privacy.

Structure of the Gatherings:

1. Whichever location is chosen, the space will need to be arranged in a way that allows for each person to see the others. A circle of chairs is usually best.
2. It is common for the host to prepare some snacks and drinks; however, we have found that several attendees enjoy bringing food as well. Encourage the couples to bring their favorite drinks. Even though it’s not mandatory, it does help ease the expense for the host.

3. The first 20-30 minutes is a time for gathering and socializing. Usually the crowd gathers around the food.
4. At an appropriate time, the host will call the couples to the circle and begin the evening.
5. We have created videos that will help set up each evening with questions and they guide the couples through the various steps of sharing.
6. The bulk of the time is spent using these videos. At the end of the night, someone can offer a prayer and dismiss.