

THE GATHERING USA

Backgrounder

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The Gathering/USA, Inc. is a national outreach movement started in 1978 by Dr. John Tolson. He originally developed The Gathering as an evangelical strategy for giving men much needed spiritual direction to strengthen their faith and lead their families. The basic approach, which provides monthly networking and leadership events for Christian men and their friends, has proven to be extremely successful.

Since its launch, The Gathering has impacted more than a half million men and has become a powerful network of chapters in 16 U.S. cities and soon to begin in South Africa. Numerous charities, even international groups, have been aided by the group's longstanding community service programs and missions. Across the U.S. chapters have worked with national organizations such as Habitat for Humanity. In 2002, The Gathering took its outreach to the Dominican Republic where it has constructed clinics, churches, sports facilities and a school that serves more than 500 children.

More than 30 employees help run the organization nationwide, including full-time staff in select cities that are also supported by a large volunteer network. Gathering chapters are based in the U.S. cities of Baton Rouge (LA), Bloomington (IL), Columbus (OH), Dallas (TX), Houston (TX), Myrtle Beach (SC), Orlando (FL), Palm Beach (FL), Pittsburgh (PA), San Antonio (TX) and throughout the Southern California region.

With each year, The Gathering becomes a greater resource for Christians, churches and for the community at large. Gathering events range from intimate networking breakfasts and lunches to major seminars and conferences featuring powerhouse speakers such as Joe Gibbs, Mike Krzyzewski, Ken Blanchard and Adolph Coors. On the average, some 500-1000 men attend the events, which often include participation by top business and government leaders. A new Gathering of Women group is also experiencing significant annual growth.

At the heart of all Gathering ministries rests a strong belief in leadership, teaching and discipleship. The organization creates many tools for the community, from books and tapes to seminars and outreach programs. One seminar, *Qualities of a Leader; Maximum Impact*, regularly features a simulcast with the best-selling author and leadership guru John C. Maxwell. The Gathering also created an accredited seminary level course with the national group, Promise Keepers, which trains pastors and others on how to develop men's ministries in the church.

Other projects include a video *Children in Rage/Fathers of Hope* and a seminar series *Dads and Moms that Make a Difference*, both designed to teach effective parenting techniques. Additionally, there are many grassroots programs, such as 50 Good Men, aimed at encouraging men to give back to their community, *Read & Succeed* which is a program that tutors at-risk and inner-city kids and *First Step*, a basketball camp and mentoring program. Another project called Mission Emanuel focuses on doing and teaching mission work. The Gathering also puts on a 5 ½ hour seminar called *Becoming a Person of High Impact: A Discipleship Seminar* focusing on discipleship and living a balanced life.

The Gathering has fervently helped to create stronger families and stronger communities through Bible-centered principles of love and leadership. It continues to make new and greater strides with Tolson remaining at the helm as Chairman and with the guidance of Larry Kreider, its CEO of nearly 20 years. Tolson and Kreider have recently adapted their successful Gathering seminar, *The Four Priorities*, into an in-depth workbook that is being released nationwide.