

What is Cowboy Church?

This is an overview of the Cowboy church model currently used by the Texas Fellowship of Cowboy Churches.

Mission- To reach the lost in the western/cowboy culture with the gospel of Jesus Christ and provide a church home where they can become more like Christ.

This is a narrowly defined mission to reach a people group that has not been reached in large numbers by the traditional church. The mission is narrow by design and without its tight focus we will not reach these people in large numbers.

Culture- Who is in the western culture?

1. **Working Cowboys-** makes all or part of their living horseback, they represent a small part of this population and they may be the hardest to reach.
2. **Professional Rodeo Cowboys** make all or a part of their living on the rodeo circuit and again are very few in number.
3. **Arena Cowboys & Cowgirls-** makes his or her living somewhere other than the ranch or rodeo but they love arena activities such as team roping, barrel racing, team penning, ranch rodeo, sorting, cutting, play day etc.
4. **Cattle people-** these may be large ranchers with hundreds or thousands of head or people who own a few cows or even one FFA steer. They may or may not use horses.
5. **Horse people-** these people love horses, they may trail ride, western pleasure, show horses, raise horses, race horses or just have a few nags in the pasture and they may or may not care anything about a cow.
6. **Cowboys at heart-** people who just love the cowboy and what he stands for. They wear boots, jeans and a cowboy hat, they listen to country music, have all of John Wayne's movies on DVD and Capt. Augustus McCrae and Capt. Woodrow F. Call are their heroes.
7. **Cowboy mentality people-** these folks may be linked to the culture through their past, parents or family, they are people who live by a code, your word is your bond, a honest days word for an honest days pay, they may be electricians, carpenters, law enforcement officers, firefighters, business men, working folks, country folks, people who love the land, farmers, hunters fishermen.

The further you go down this list a larger number of these folks are in the population. These are the people God has called us to reach that traditional churches have failed to reach in large numbers

Focus- How do you reach this culture?

If you focus at the top of the list and you won't leave anyone behind. The working cowboy may be the hardest to reach but if you can do church in a way that he will come, then you will reach everyone else on the list. If you can reach those that are die hard in the culture, they will draw others like themselves and they will draw those who admire their lifestyle. Again it is using the culture as a tool to reach more people for Jesus.

Even though there are more people at the bottom of this list, if you focus on those at the bottom, your cowboy church will look less and less like a cowboy church over time. No doubt all cowboy churches are different and will have a different mix of people within the western culture but if God called you to reach cowboys you will need some in your church to keep it focused on the culture.

Approach- How is Cowboy church different from traditional church?

Unlike most traditional churches where the focus is inward on Christians where the church provides a safe haven from the world where people with the same values and beliefs can grow to be more like Christ, the Cowboy churches focus is outward and actually does church for the lost and unchurched.

The goal of cowboy church is to do church in such a way that a lost cowboy can be comfortable enough to sit there long enough to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ while those around him are worshipping God. It is a non-judgmental approach that does not beat people down for what they have done or what they are, but provides hope and forgiveness, accepting people just as they are, in their sin, just as Jesus did. This means that you may have to rub elbows with people who do not believe like you or have the same values as you. That is why this church will not suit everyone.

Cowboy Church Structure- How is the structure of Cowboy church different?

The structure of the cowboy church is very different from the traditional church structure. The cowboy church uses a structure which includes “elders,” Lay Pastors, Team Leaders and team members and revolves around three basic principles, *lay empowerment with accountability, cultural relevance and pastoral care in small groups.*

Building and grounds

The building needs to be relevant to the culture, a barn, an expo center, an open metal building with concrete floors with a rustic look. Building should be as open as possible with plenty of space and access to the outside. Parking should be large enough to accommodate trucks with stock trailers. If possible the church needs enough land for an arena, if not one that is relatively close in the community should be used for an arena ministry.