

LoveSTRONG

FOCUS: Cowboy Church Ministries

“Howdy, Partner! Ministering to People through Cowboy Church Ministries”

Session Overview

Through this study children will:

- Discover how cowboy churches minister to a very special group.
- Learn how giving to the Mary Hill Davis Offering supports cowboy churches.
- Learn how they can “LoveStrong” as a part of Texas Missions.

Children’s Memory Verse

1 John 3:16-18

New International Reader’s Version (NIRV)

¹⁶ We know what love is because Jesus Christ gave his life for us. So we should give our lives for our brothers and sisters.

¹⁷ Suppose someone sees a brother or sister in need and is able to help them. If he doesn’t take pity on them, how can the love of God be in him?

¹⁸ Dear children, don’t just talk about love. Put your love into action. Then it will truly be love.

Prepare to Teach

1. Read Scripture verses. Invite the Lord to fill your heart with overflowing love for others. Leaders across Texas will be sharing how to “LoveStrong.” This material tells how one cowboy church loves their community; however, the most influential stories you will share will be your own examples of how the Lord used you to love others.
2. Write your church’s goal and individual children’s group goal on the week of prayer poster. Display the poster at children’s eyelevel.
3. Read through the material and adapt the lesson to fit your group.
4. Gather and purchase necessary supplies, prepare the items listed, and make the copies you will need.

Leader Introduction

1 John 3:16-18. Verses 16-17 remind believers of the incredible gift of salvation we have because of Jesus Christ’s love and sacrifice for us. Scripture continues by charging believers to take action having received such undeserved grace. Verse 18 is direct in instructing believers to do more than just talk the talk. It has believers lace up our sneakers, get off the couch and “LoveStrong!”

Children's study: Northeast Texas Cowboy Church

Pastor Charles Thomas leads a very unique group of church members. They love horses, chili, and rodeos. Can you guess what kind of church he might pastor? That's right. A cowboy church. I need a little help today. Every time I say "cowboy", I need you to help me by responding with "yee-haw" and pretend to swing a lasso around over your head. Let's practice. "Cowboy"

Pastor Thomas grew up in the country, and when he retired God called him to start a special church that would make cowboy (yee-haw) families feel right at home. The Northeast Texas Cowboy (yee-haw) Church is in Big Sandy, Texas. Cowboys (yee-haw) are known for their relaxed way of life. The Northeast Texas Cowboy (yee-haw) Church has adopted that same relaxed attitude and likes to have simple services where families can come and praise Jesus. They include many activities like cooking, outside games, and even rodeos so families can invite other cowboy (yee-haw) families that might not feel comfortable at other churches. Pastor Thomas and the members of Northeast Texas Cowboy (yee-haw) Church love others the way Jesus does. They LoveStrong.

Now, you may think the story ends there. It doesn't. This church is not just an awesome example of how to reach cowboy (yee-haw) families. It is a great example of how God blesses His children when we LoveStrong. You see, the Northeast Texas Cowboy (yee-haw) church started out as a primarily African American church. They began to grow and grow and love people like Jesus loves them; can you guess what happened? (allow children to respond) You got it. Soon, people started talking about how the members of this church loved God more than anything, loved country life, and loved people. This began to attract all types of cowboy (yee-haw) families. Today, the church is multicultural. That means that there are different cultures of people who all come together to praise Jesus and enjoy fellowship with other cowboy (yee-haw) families!

Bicycle Rodeo: Giving/Doing Activity

Supplies Needed:

- Crayons/markers
- Cardstock
- Stickers (optional)

Preparation:

- Speak with leaders and set a date for the outreach activity
- Recruit volunteers to help with the event. This can be as simple or as elaborate as you wish. Children may prepare tricks to display. Volunteers may set up cones for children to "barrel race"
- Prepare parent information flyer for the event
- Prepare a sample invitation for children to view

Explain to children that they will be making invitations for a friend to attend a bicycle rodeo. Remind children that our verse challenges us to LoveStrong. State that helping our friends learn about Jesus is the number one way we can LoveStrong. Invite children to think of someone they know who may not have a lot of friends. Ask them, "How would Jesus love that person?" Challenge children to create an invitation just for that person.

BONUS: After creating the invitations, ask students to get in pairs and practice how they will invite their

friends. Remind students that it is important to keep Jesus first. Just like the Northeast Texas Cowboy Church, we want our friends to know that we love Jesus and that we love to have fun, too.

Bible Verse Activity: Scripture Round-Up

Supplies Needed:

- Bibles for individual children
- Self-Stick Chart Paper or poster board and tape
- Markers - one color per group

Preparation:

- Write Scripture reference -1 John 3:16-18 - on chart/poster or white board.
- Mount self-stick chart paper or poster board on walls. The number of chart papers will vary depending on the group size. There will be a minimum of 3 chart papers needed, one per verse.
- Write 1 John 3:16, 1 John 3:17, and 1 John 3:18 on individual chart papers.
- For younger children, mark the verses in the Bible.

Invite children to read the verse out loud with you in various groups:

- All the boys/girls
- Everyone in slow motion
- Call for volunteers to read using their best country cowboy accent!

Be creative!

How to play:

- Divide children into small groups and assign each small group to a verse (on paper/poster). Give each group a color marker that they will use for all three posters.
- Groups will re-read the verse written on the chart paper/poster board then have two minutes to write as many thoughts as come to mind when reading that verse. Children can identify key words or write examples. Younger children may draw examples.
- Leader will keep time. At the end of two minutes, the leader will yell out “YEE-HAW” and students to rotate clockwise and repeat the activity with the new verse.
- Challenge children to only write and draw NEW thoughts and ideas. The third rotation will be the most challenging.

Closing: Camp Fire Popcorn Prayer

Supplies needed

- Red and yellow tissue paper (flames)
- Brown paper towel rolls (logs)
- Popcorn
- Bowl
- Small cups

Preparation

- Build a “camp fire” in your room
- Pour popped popcorn into a large bowl

Have children sit around the campfire. Share the statement below as you pour the popcorn into cups for the children. Explain that popcorn prayer is a fun way to pray as a group. Let them know that you will start the prayer, then pause and let them “popcorn” around the room and add to the prayer, then you will close

the prayer.

Say: The Northeast Texas Cowboy Church is only one example of the many cowboy churches that have been started. The cowboy churches are growing fast. Existing churches are starting new churches within a couple of years after they have been started. Let's pray for all the leaders of cowboy churches, such as Pastor Thomas, new church starters, and all the cowboy families that will be reached through these cowboy churches.

Family Activity: Chuck Wagon Trail Mix

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Today your child learned about the Northeast Texas Cowboy Church and the many ways the members are showing love to people in their community. They keep their love for Christ at the center of their ministry but also find common ground in their love of country life.

We invite you to take some time with your child this week making a delicious snack and let them tell you all about it.

Preparation:

- 2 cups low-sugar, whole-grain cereal
- 1 cup raisins
- 1 cup dried fruit, like cranberries, apricots, or apples
- 1 cup nuts, like walnuts, almonds, or pistachios
- 1 cup sunflower seeds or pumpkin seeds
- 1 cup dark chocolate chips
- Big bowl
- Small zip-top bags
- A Bible, mark 1 John 3:16-18

How to Make Trail Mix

- 1) Wash your hands.
- 2) Put all of the food in the bowl.
- 3) Mix it up with your hands.
- 4) Put 2 handfuls of your trail mix in a zip-top bag.
- 5) Keep putting trail mix in bags until the bowl is empty.

