

RURAL AMERICA

CHURCHPLANTING



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

(CONTEXTUAL & CONCEPTUAL)

WELL-WORN BOOTS

(WALKING THE WALK)



BARN RAISING

(CREATING A CULTURE OF LEADERSHIP)



NOODLING

(RECRUITING LEADERSHIP)



NASCAR

(BUILDING LEADERSHIP CREWS)



A COUNTRY BOY CAN SURVIVE

(EVANGELISM)



GOIN' HUNTIN'

(DISCIPLESHIP)



WELL-WORN BOOTS (WALKING THE WALK)

*“The greatest need of my people is my personal holiness.”
Robert Murray McCheyne*

*“I got my dirt road cred back when I was twelve”
(What Makes you Country) Luke Bryan*

“City people. They may know how to street fight but they don't know how to wade through manure.”

In Small Town Rural America, leadership is more about the calouses on your hands and the holes in your jeans than the diplomas on your wall and the confession of your lips. Don't just tell me, show me! If you want to be a leader in a small town, your boots will need to be well-worn to earn your dirt cred. The values of leadership are much different on the back road than the hallway of seminary. As a churchplanter, you will need to embrace the **both/and** and reject the **either/or**. We must establish a gospel cadence within the tension of these biblical values.

Here are just a few that I have had to wrestle with:

HOLEYNESS VS. HOLINESS
YOUR WORD VS. GOD'S WORD
EXPERIENCE VS. SCHOOLING
COMMUNITY VS. KINGDOM

RELIGION VS. RELATIONSHIP
FAMILY VS. FELLOWSHIP
TRADITION VS. TRANSFORMATION
BETTER LIFE VS. NEW LIFE

Jesus led his disciples by challenging them to take up their cross daily and follow him.

[23] And he said to all, **“If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.** [24] For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. [25] For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? [26] For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. - Luke 9:23-26

In a world with manufactured holey jeans, artificially weathered shoes, and distressed furniture, we might think that we can somehow manufacture dirt cred leadership. Well-worn boots are only broken in by walking the walk daily, weekly, monthly and yearly following Jesus in your community, denying yourself, taking up your cross and loving his small town people.

As a churchplanter, you must learn how to keep in step with the Spirit. (Galatians 5:5) We must learn a Christ-centered Cadence (left... right... left... right) that unites these competing values according to the gospel. To lead well in a Rural Small Town, we must learn how to walk with a Gospel Swagger to effectively communicate and demonstrate the good news of Jesus Christ.

Salvation is by grace alone but in a small town it needs to get dirty.

Questions:

**Which of the competing values above do you see/experience in your small town?
Share some real examples.**

Discuss how these values are biblically connected rather than competing.

Think of some practical ways you can practice a gospel swagger in your small town?



BARN RAISING (DEVELOPING A LEADERSHIP CULTURE)

“My vision of the gathered church that had come to me... had been replaced by a vision of the gathered community. What I saw now was the community imperfect and irresolute but held together by the frayed and always fraying, incomplete and yet ever-holding bonds of the various sorts of affection. There had maybe never been anybody who had not been loved by somebody, who had been loved by somebody else, and so on and on... It was a community always disappointed in itself, disappointing its members, always trying to contain its divisions and gentle its meanness, always failing and yet always preserving a sort of will toward goodwill. I knew that, in the midst of all the ignorance and error, this was a membership; it was the membership of Port William and of no other place on earth. My vision gathered the community as it never has been and never will be gathered in this world of time, for the community must always be marred by members who are indifferent to it or against it, who are nonetheless its members and maybe nonetheless essential to it. And yet I saw them all as somehow perfected, beyond time, by one another's love, compassion, and forgiveness, as it is said we may be perfected by grace.”

— Wendell Berry, *Jayber Crow*

Nehemiah 2:18; 4:6,17

And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, **“Let us rise up and build.”** So they strengthened their hands for the good work... So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for **the people had a mind to work...** Those who carried burdens were loaded in such a way that **each labored on the work with one hand and held his weapon with the other.**

1 Peter 2:4–5

[4] As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, [5] **you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house**, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

As Jesus walks through the seven churches in Revelation, he reveals the culture of each church through his commendations, admonitions and rewards. The disciples also spill much ink in their epistles exhorting the church to repent and to unite together promoting a gospel culture of “one anothering”, “union in Christ”, “priesthood of all believers” and “one accordness”. Community is a huge value in small town America, so we ought to consider developing leaders within community rather than isolation. When it comes to developing a leadership culture, we can benefit from considering the Small Town Barn Raising. There are some great principles in a Barn Raising that can help you as you develop your small town church-wide leadership culture.

MANDATORY
COMMUNITY-WIDE
SKILLED & UNSKILLED
WORKING TOGETHER
UNIFIED PURPOSE
GENERATIONAL

Questions:

What is the difference between volunteers and partners?

Do you have a process for developing men, women and children into leaders?

What are the obstacles that you must face with leaders that are not classically educated?



NOODLING

There is a joke that asks “What is the last thing you hear before a redneck dies?”
and the answer is: “Y’all watch this.”

Luke 5:10–11

[10] and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.” [11] And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

Small towns get a bad rap when it comes to leadership. As a rural churchplanter, you have to set aside your academic accolades and corner office preconceptions about leadership and wade out into water. There are plenty of leaders in rural small towns, you just have to look in unexpected places. We are trained to fish for leaders with a fly rod but in a small town you have to go noodling.

SHALLOW WATER
CATFISH HIDEOUTS
BARRICADE WITH NOODLING BUDDIES
DEEP BREATHE AND SUBMERGE
WAIT FOR THE BITE

Questions:

What are the defining marks of a leader in your small town?

Where are the leaders in your community?

What components will work and not work in your small town for leadership training?



NASCAR

(Building Leadership Teams)

“Jack, Wheels Off, Fuel In, Wheels On... GO, GO, GO!”

Ephesians 4:11–13

[11] And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, [12] to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, [13] until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...

In a small rural town, the preacher makes or breaks a church. Right? We just got to get a good preacher in here and we will grow like wildfire. But much like NASCAR it takes a team to win. Sure the preacher matters, but the crew behind the scene will make the church thrive long term. We will be wise to consider a NASCAR crew to help us think through a healthy rural churchplant team.

NASCAR Crew:

DRIVER: THE PREACHER IS NOT THE DRIVER OF THE CHURCH. JESUS IS! WE HAVE TO MOVE AWAY FROM A PERSONALITY-BASED LEADERSHIP MODEL TO A TEAM MODEL.

BIG THREE: (VISION, COMMUNICATION, IMPLEMENTATION)

TEAM MANAGER: (ADMIN/COMMUNICATION)

SPOTTER: (VISION)

CREW CHIEF: (IMPLEMENTATION)

PIT CREW: (POWER HOUSE)

(JACKMAN, TIRE CARRIERS/CHANGERS, FUEL MAN, MECHANICS, TRUCK DRIVER)

Questions:

Which is the hardest to find in a small town: Visionary, Implementer, Communicator?

Have you identified the crew members needed for each of your key ministries?

What is the best way to bring in new leaders into the mix?



COUNTRY SONGS (EVANGELISM)

*Love is like a dyin' ember/ Only memories remain/ Through the ages I'll remember/
Blue eyes cryin' in the rain - Willie Nelson*

*When you walked away my heart went with you/ You stole it from me the day that we met/
And now I must live my life in sorrow/ No home just a drifter on the sea of regret*

Psalm 42:5

[5] Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation.

Canned evangelism techniques may rack up the #'s with coerced decisions, but it won't break through the old time religion mindset nor open the heart of those who have lived under the weight of shame all their lives. Just as the country songs play over and over on the radio, the regret, shame and guilt are looping in the hearts of the small town man and woman.

Small town pride demands respect and best to be uncovered rather than confronted or you will have a fight on your hands. Jesus practiced the art of questioning to prompt discovery in the hearts of his listeners. We must do the same and in doing so we help those in our community rewrite their story and find true identity in Christ.

Here are some of the raw themes that are on the top ten charts in every small town:

LIVING PAYCHECK TO PAYCHECK
THE GLORY DAYS ARE IN THE PAST
CRISIS IS AROUND EVERY CORNER
PLEASURE AT ALL COST
REGRET OF BAD DECISIONS
LOSS AND FEAR OF LOSS
BETRAYAL
PAIN IS MORE COMFORTABLE THAN STABILITY
LIVE FOR THE MOMENT
ALCOHOL A WAY OF LIFE

Questions:

What is your method of sharing the gospel in your town? Is it working?

What is the prevalent identity crisis in your town?

What questions will prompt discovery in your community?



GOIN' HUNTIN' (DISCIPLESHIP)

"When he was young, I told Dale Jr. that hunting and racing are a lot alike. Holding that steering wheel and holding that rifle both mean you better be responsible." — Dale Earnhardt

"My dinner is still in the woods."

2 Peter 1:5–8

[5] For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, [6] and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, [7] and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. [8] For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Grab your rifle and hit the woods. It's time for discipleship. The classroom has a place in small town America, but the woods - now that's a teaching environment. Key principles for Hunting fits right into a small town model for discipleship.

RESPONSIBILITY
RELATIONAL
SEASONAL
GENERATIONAL

DANGEROUS
WATCH AND LEARN
STORY-TELLING

Questions:

What is your plan of discipleship at your churchplant? Does it include mind, heart and body?

How can you incorporated the rhythms of your town into a discipleship plan?

After three years in your church, what do you hope to impart to those in your church family?