



# children's Materials

are needed in order for outreach events to take place. Refer to these facts throughout the study.

## Internet Resources

American Fellowship of Cowboy Churches website ([www.americanfcc.org](http://www.americanfcc.org)); YouTube, AP, “Cowboy Churches Rope in New Christians”; YouTube, Fox News, “Cowboy Church of Ellis County ”; Texas Baptist Western Heritage Ministry, ([www.texasbaptists.org/evangelism-missions/western-heritage-ministry](http://www.texasbaptists.org/evangelism-missions/western-heritage-ministry)); Cowboy Church of Ellis County, ([www.cowboyfaith.org](http://www.cowboyfaith.org))

## Western Heritage Ministries

Cowboy churches are among the fastest growing churches, with a mission to reach the lost for Christ in the western/cowboy culture. These churches give attendees a place to worship, grow, and serve where they feel at home. Within 11 years, 170 Texas Baptist Cowboy churches, plus 42 in 13 states outside Texas, have been started. The goal is to have 350 Cowboy churches by the end of 2018 and 200 outside the state of Texas by 2015. Cowboy churches average 30 baptisms a year, and many of those baptized are adult men. Men are encouraged to be the leaders in their homes and churches.

Over five million people, or 20 percent of Texans, are a part of this Western Heritage culture. This includes working cowboys, professional or arena cowboys and cowgirls, cattle and horse people. Those who are cowboys at heart also love the music and dress. The traditional church has not been able to reach this people group in large numbers. Cowboy churches average close to 200, and 80 percent of those reached were lost or unchurched.

Cowboy churches are non-judgmental, wanting to provide hope and forgiveness and accept people just as they are. The

gospel is always presented at the end of the service. Those who pray to receive Christ are not called to the front, but are asked to fill out a card and place it in a bucket or milk can in the back of the church. Offerings are also placed in these containers. Most baptisms are conducted in a horse trough during the service.

A Cowboy church may begin in a sale barn, an expo center, or an open metal building. The worship center usually has concrete floors with rustic western decor and one or more arenas on its property or nearby. A Cowboy pastor may wear his hat while he preaches, but he always removes it when he prays. Country gospel, bluegrass, or cowboy music is played by a band in many churches.

Arena or rodeo events are held regularly by the Cowboy churches for outreach and fellowship. Events include bull riding, team roping, barrel racing, horse shows, and other activities for all ages. Winners of various ranch rodeos compete in the finals at the Annual Gathering. Many visitors attend the arena events, and the gospel is always presented. Charles Higgs, director of Western Heritage Ministry, says, “When we see the hoof prints, we see more baptisms. We’ve got to be where the hoof prints are.”

Texas Baptists’ Western Heritage Ministry partners with the American Fellowship of Cowboy Churches (AFCC). The AFCC promotes unity among the Cowboy churches by providing support, communication, resources, and training through the Ranch House School of Church Planting. Annual events, ranch rodeos, and children and youth camps are also part of their ministries.

Supported by the Mary Hill Davis Offering, Texas Baptists and AFCC work together to provide presence and a witness at major rodeo events. More than 200 riders on horseback and in wagons from AFCC churches participated in the 2011 Livestock Show and Parade in Ft. Worth, Texas. Christian cowboy trading

## Closing Prayer Time Trail Ride

**Prepare:** Have the “Take Home Activity” and offering envelopes for each child to take home. Print out the prayer needs for “trail ride” groups. You may want to provide “trail mix” snacks after they pray.

**Teach:** Show the Mary Hill Davis Offering poster and envelopes and discuss ways they can save and give. Identify prayer needs from the “Cowboy Words” displayed around the room, and the prayer needs listed. Divide the children into smaller teams and assign a “trail boss” to lead each group. Take a “trail ride” around the room, stopping at words to pray. “Trail mix” can be served after the prayer time.

Prayer needs:

- Pray for the Cowboy Fellowship of Atascosa County and other Cowboy churches, pastors, and their families as they share God’s Word.
- Pray for new Cowboy churches to be started and for new pastors to be called and trained.
- Pray for Allen and Sue Upshaw to know God’s plan.
- Pray that Western Heritage Ministry events will reach many for Christ.
- Pray that we will give to the Mary Hill Davis Offering so that more people will come to know Jesus as their Savior.



Annette Smith, and husband Clay have three boys, one married to a beautiful wife, and a precious granddaughter, Maddie. A Baylor graduate and active in missions, Annette enjoys planning, teaching, training and participating in various events. Currently, she directs Girls in Action and TeamKids at Northwest Park Baptist Church and serves on the San Antonio WMU Council.



Mary Hill Davis, president of Texas WMU from 1906 to 1931, saw Texas as a rich harvest field with its mixture of Anglo, Black, European, and Mexican populations. In 1910 she led the Baptist women of Texas to set aside a week to pray for the needs in the state and to take up an offering as they did for foreign and home missions. Following her death in 1934, the Texas missions offering was named in her memory.

## Western Heritage Ministry Session Overview:

Through this study children will:

- Discover how Texas Baptists, through the Western Heritage Ministry, are working alongside the American Fellowship of Cowboy Churches to start and support new Cowboy churches.
- Learn how our giving to the Mary Hill Davis Offering will support an outreach and an evangelistic presence at major stock show and rodeo events.
- Understand the need for Cowboy churches and how they reach out and minister in their communities.
- Be presented with God’s plan of salvation for all through Jesus Christ and be encouraged to memorize John 3:16.

## How to Use this Material:

This material is designed to be used in children’s programs such as: Sunday School, TeamKID, Girls in Action®, Royal Ambassadors, Children in Action®, and children’s church, or in a homeschool setting. This teaching plan can be taught in a one-hour session, or individual activities and resources can be used to supplement any program or schedule.

## Children’s Memory Verse

“For God so loved the world that he gave His one and only Son,

that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16 NIV).

## Prepare to Teach

1. Display the week of prayer poster with your church’s goal written on it.

2. Read through this material and choose the activities that

will work best with your class. Additional information and resources are available at [www.maryhilldavis.org](http://www.maryhilldavis.org).

3. Secure supplies, prepare the items listed with each activity, and make the copies you will need.

4. View the Internet sources provided in the introduction and have available a computer with Internet access, a large screen projector, or a TV to show the videos of Cowboy church (optional).

5. If desired, use rustic or western decorations in the meeting area.

**Theme:**  
“Unchained...Set Free”

**Scripture:**  
2 Timothy 2:9b-10

**Date:**  
September 11-18, 2011

**Suggested Music:**  
“Amazing Grace: My Chains are Gone” (Chris Tomlin)  
“Amazing Grace”  
“Open My Eyes”  
“He Set Me Free”

**MHD Offering Goal:**  
\$4,110,000

## Introduction

Paul writes in 2 Timothy 2:9b-10 that God’s Word is not chained and even though

we may be limited, God’s Word can still go out to all people in Texas and beyond. This information and the Internet sources on Western Heritage Ministries will help leaders understand why and how Texas Baptists support, encourage, and pray for Cowboy churches. Funds from the Mary Hill Davis Offering

cards, Bibles, and information were available at the 2011 San Antonio Stock Show and Rodeo booth where Cowboy pastors and church members from churches all around Texas greeted visitors.

### **Introductory Activity: Cowboy Church Word Roundup**

**Prepare:** Write the “Cowboy Church Words” on index cards to pass out to each child. The words can be duplicated or they can work in teams. Tape will be needed to place the words around the room after the activity. Cowboy Church Words:

- partners
- stock show and rodeo
- country/western
- Saddle Up class
- horse trough
- cowboy hat
- arena
- ranch rodeo
- “Happy Trails”
- Western Heritage Ministry
- AFCC
- Ranch House Cowboy Church School

**Teach:** Give each child a card and instruct them to hold up their card and shout “Yee-Haw” when the “Cowboy Church Clue” you read aloud matches their word. Have them tape the cards around the room to use during the “Prayer Time.” See the Introduction for more information.

#### **Cowboy Church Clues:**

- Texas Baptists and the American Fellowship of Cowboy Churches work together to start new Cowboy churches. (partners)
- A large fenced area outside where cowboys ride, people cheer, and the good news of Christ is shared (arena)
- Many come from far and near to see cowboys and livestock and listen to western singers. (stock show and rodeo)
- Music played by a band in a Cowboy church (country/western)
- Lessons taught to new church members to help them get “in the saddle” of church and their faith (Saddle Up

class)

- This is filled with water and used for baptisms when someone asks Jesus to forgive their sins and be Lord of their life. (horse trough)
- Worn in church by many, but taken off when they pray (cowboy hat)
- Rodeos that take place among Cowboy churches each year and winners meet and compete in the finals at the Annual Gathering (ranch rodeo)
- Children at Cowboy Church in Ellis County sing this happy song for the adults at the end of their Sunday worship service. (“Happy Trails”)
- American Fellowship of Cowboy Churches (AFCC)
- A school for preachers and others who want to start new Cowboy churches. (Ranch House Cowboy Church School)
- The ministry that Director Charles Higgs leads so Texas Baptists can reach out to those of western culture (Western Heritage Ministry)

### **Mission Stories**

**Prepare:** Duplicate the Children’s Teaching Picture (Item 1) and “Take Home Activity” (Item 2) at the end of this material, or download a full-size sheet from [www.maryhilldavis.org](http://www.maryhilldavis.org). These are pictures that illustrate the stories. Tell the children that they will hear stories about how God is using Cowboy churches to reach out and minister to others. You may also want to show one or more of the Internet videos of Cowboy church during this time.

#### **Feeling at Home in a Cowboy Church**

Allen and Sue Upshaw spent several days at the 2011 Stock Show and Rodeo in San Antonio, Texas. They handed out Bibles and information and greeted visitors that stopped by a booth sponsored by Texas Baptists and the American Fellowship of Cowboy Churches. Funds from the Mary Hill Davis Offering helped make this outreach and ministry possible.

Before visiting a Cowboy church three years ago, Allen was

very depressed. He said that his life “was upside down with nothing to stand on.” Allen and Sue heard the truth that Jesus loves them and has a plan for their lives at Cowboy Church of Ellis County. They asked Jesus to forgive their sins and were baptized in a horse trough. Allen and Sue both feel at home at Cowboy church and they now have God’s truth to stand on.

Allen and Sue help with the buck-out events, which is bull and bronc riding in the church’s arena. Barrel racing, team roping, and events for children also take place each week. Arena events are an important way that Cowboy churches reach out to others in their community that may not know Jesus.

Allen and Sue feel that God wants them to start a new Cowboy church in another community. They have attended the Ranch House School of Church Planting together and are praying that God will lead them in His plan. Allen knows that there are others in the western culture who need to know Jesus and would also feel at home in a Cowboy church.

#### **Cowboy Fellowship of Atascosa County**

Good music, food, fellowship, a short sermon, and some roping marked the beginning of Cowboy Fellowship of Atascosa County. The church grew from a small gathering that met at a private arena to now having 500-700 in attendance each week. Pastor Pete Pawelek preached their first service on May 3, 2003, and continues to encourage the members to grow in the Lord and lead out in ministry.

Cowboy Fellowship has Bible studies, activities, ministries, and arena events for all ages. Ranch rodeo, held every year, offers free events and is a creative way to share the gospel. Free produce from their community garden is given out during “Share the Harvest” days.

“I get to learn about God while doing fun stuff!” says 10-year-old Annalisa from Cowboy Fellowship. Adam Shelburne,

the pastor of Children and Discipleship, wants to teach the children to follow Christ their whole life. The children enjoy events like “Crazy Hair Day” and play days in the arena where they have fun with horses.

Annalisa also says, “I learned that God watches over everybody and loves everybody.” Cowboy Fellowship members show God’s love as they minister in their community and around the world through the mission projects they support.

### **Saddle Up: The ABCs of Salvation**

**Prepare:** Duplicate Children’s Resource (Item 3: “ABCs of Salvation”) or download a full-sized sheet from [www.maryhilldavis.org](http://www.maryhilldavis.org). Be sure to have a copy for each child, along with Bibles and pencils. Print out Romans 3:23, John 3:16, and Romans 10:9-10 to display.

**Teach:** The children may be familiar with the “ABCs of Salvation” but don’t assume they fully understand or have made a personal decision for Christ. It is important that the Holy Spirit is working in their life and that children are not pressured to make a decision.

**Say:** At the end of each sermon the Cowboy pastor presents God’s plan of salvation. He will ask those who prayed to accept Jesus as their Savior to fill out a card and put it in the milk jug or bucket in the back of the church. Someone will then visit and encourage them to attend Saddle Up classes. These classes help them understand what it means to have a relationship with God and His people. The Bible verses we will look up will help us know how much God loves us and that he has a plan for our lives.

#### **The ABCs of Salvation**

- “A” stands for Admit. You must admit to God that you are a sinner and in need of God. You must turn away from your sin and turn towards God. Romans 3:23 says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

- “B” stands for Believe. You must believe that Jesus died on the cross and rose again to pay for your sins. The Bible tells us how much God loves us in John 3:16. “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”
- “C” stands for Confess. You must confess your faith in Jesus. Romans 10:9-10 tells us, “that if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.”

You can talk to God in a prayer and tell Him you are sorry for your sins. If you believe that Jesus died on the cross to pay for you sins, then you can confess Jesus as Lord.

*(Have a brief prayer time and be aware of those who may need to talk with you or someone about salvation.)*

**Review Activity:** After the presentation, give each child Children’s Resource Item 3 and a pencil. Have Bibles available and help the younger ones look up the verses as they complete their worksheets. Point out how important it is to know God’s Word. Have them find a partner and practice memorizing John 3:16. Say it together and encourage them to learn this important verse.

### **Sharing God’s Word**

**Prepare:** Tell the children about “The Great Texas Handoff” and discuss ways they can tell others about Jesus. Give them an opportunity to complete one of the activities using John 3:16 and verses from the plan of salvation. Encourage them to share what they created with someone who may not know Jesus.

#### **The Great Texas Handoff**

The Great Texas Handoff was a 634-mile-long trail ride across Texas to help us remember the first Christians who traveled in wagons with Bibles in their saddlebags, preaching

and building churches along their way. Hundreds of members from Cowboy churches, riding on horseback and in wagons, took part in this handoff that began on the Texas-Louisiana border on April 17, 2010, and ended on October 8, 2010, on the Texas-New Mexico state line. Hand-tooled leather Bibles and saddlebags were handed off to the next team all across Texas. These Bibles and saddlebags were then auctioned off at the AFCC Annual Gathering for a total of \$3,925. This money will be used to help plant new Cowboy churches across Texas.

### **Sharing God’s Word Activities**

**Prepare:** Gather the needed supplies listed under each activity.

*(continued on back page)*

#### **“Leather” Bible Verse Booklet:**

Have brown construction paper or foam sheets and white paper to make a Bible verse booklet. Provide markers, scissors, a stapler, glue, or other supplies depending on how the booklets will be constructed. Show the children how to fold a few papers inside the cover and staple or lace it together to make a booklet. Be sure that they include the plan of salvation using John 3:16. Words or verses from the activity sheet can be cut out and used.

#### **John 3:16 in Motion**

Some children may want to make up hand motions or create a rap to help them learn John 3:16. They can work alone or in a group.

#### **Bible Verse Magnet**

Provide foam or card stock, magnet strips, markers, glue, and a wooden clothespin (optional). They will cut out a western or heart shape and write the John 3:16 or the ABCs of Salvation on it and glue it to the clothespin with a magnet on the back.