

The “Cowboy Church”

The “cowboy church” is a relatively recent innovation that has seen an explosion in growth. “Cowboy churches” are based upon the Western, cowboy culture. They are also denominational in nature. For example, the AFCC (American Fellowship of Cowboy Churches) models itself after the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Their culture and heritage shows when they assemble in a rural setting in a barn, metal building, arena, sale barn, or old western building, have their own rodeo arena, and a country gospel band. Some “cowboy churches” have covered arenas where rodeo events such as bull riding, team roping, ranch sorting, team penning, and equestrian events are held on weeknights. Rodeo schools, clinics, or camps may also be involved, as well as ranch rodeos, ranch horse competitions, chuck wagon cooking competitions, cowboy poetry gatherings, and other “cowboy culture” events.

The “cowboy church” is nothing more than a blatant attempt to advocate the social gospel. Combining the social with the spiritual corrupts the church’s mission. Socializing the church’s mission has no express statement, direct command, approved example, or inescapable implication for its support. Christ’s kingdom is a spiritual kingdom (John 18:36). It is not “*eating and drinking*” or bull riding, roping, etc. (Romans 14:17). The church of the first century participated in evangelism (1 Thessalonians 1:8), edification (1 Thessalonians 5:14-15), and benevolence (Acts 6:1-7). It assembled for the sacred purpose of worship (Acts 2:41-42). Whatever is not involved in the preceding elements is not a work of the church. Human names and human ideas are no substitute for God-inspired revelation. Make sure you have the authority of God for what you do in religion!

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