

Distinctives

Southern Country folk are predominantly rural. This middle income segment . This predominantly southern population segment consisting of agriculture, blue collar, and service workers can also be found in other rural parts of the nation. Sub-segments within this population segment include the cowboy culture. This segment has at least a high school education and some may have attended community college or trade school. Most live within 75 to 100 miles of where they grew up. Family is extremely important to them. Significant relationship is the greatest need among this people group. A trusting friendship is a valued thing. Some of this group, such as Hinterland Families may not be readily open to gather with other people groups or large groups. They would like be accepting of others into their group only if tastes and interests were similar. Trust is earned over a period of time and not quickly given to outsiders.

Hobbies include outdoor sports, racing, hunting, and fishing. The women are traditionally involved in homemaking activities, attending their children's events, and social/church networks.

Southern Country peoples grew up in a church culture. The older generations are well versed in the religious practices of their denomination. However, the younger generations may suffer from a lack of discipleship resulting in an inability to describe what they believe or why. The end result is a possible departure from church as they approach the season of their lives at which they leave the care of their parents and become independent singles. This segment is highly overchurched. The greatest threat to this segment is that it religious activity is so much a part of their lives that they may not know what a true relationship with Christ looks like. Those among the segment who are not in church, probably were raised in church and at some point decided no longer to return either because of

personal conflict or they were religiously burned out.



What Following Christ Looks Like

Preaching style in the church culture tends to be expository using the KJV because of tradition, although, because the segment is an oral communicator and learner, the unchurched culture would relate better to a thematic presentation using the NIV or even a good paraphrase.

Disciplemaking by coaching or mentoring that is "show me" rather than "tell me" will result in higher rates of commitment and leadership multiplication. Video enhanced teaching, visual aids, and anything that allows for hands on interaction will enhance the learning experience.

Music tastes will vary from southern gospel and country & western for the older generations to country or light pop for the younger folks. Multi-generational worship will take on a blend of traditional hymns and some contemporary choruses.

Southern Country congregations are family churches. Many more than likely attend the same church along with long time friends or family members. The members appreciate knowing each other. Because Pastoral care by the primary pastor is valued, average attendance for Southern Country churches lies between 75 - 100. Some churches may grow larger if a strong small group ministry is present and members allow deacons or Sunday School leaders to do the pastoral care. Small groups will allow for some cliques, and more importantly, significant, trusting relationships. Continuous starting of new units will allow for new members and prospects to build fresh relationships and find a niche within the family, clique driven church. Because of the desire for small congregations, new church starts are highly effective ways of reaching this group.

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