

# Four Anchor Posts for Small Town Mission

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Small-Town America needs missionaries.

46.2 million people (roughly 15% of the U.S. population) reside in rural America making it a critical mission field when it comes to sharing the gospel. There are many people living in small towns who are culturally "Christians" but who are not committed to Christ and His church. Some are religious non-Christians; many are "unclaimed," not participating in a religious body of any sort. Some are adherents of other world religions. All of them need the life-giving relationship offered by Jesus.

Rural and Small-Town America needs missionaries. These missionaries are not necessarily pastors who are sent into these towns to evangelize and preach. In fact, these missionaries are *already located* in these small towns. They are *every-day, regular people who think and act like missionaries* to reach the people in their families, workplaces, schools, and communities with the Gospel of Jesus.

In his book, *Small Town Mission*, Aaron Morrow tells of growing up on a farm. Fence building, he recalls, is harder than it seems. Building a wire fence successfully requires a series of anchor posts to support the wires. In the same way, he asserts, doing mission in small towns requires a few unique anchor posts to support it.

Morrow lists these four in particular:

**Post #1: Gospel Centered.** All spiritual growth happens in the midst of our ongoing sin and our ongoing need for God's grace through Christ Jesus. Pep talks and stern warnings won't develop disciples. Only the message of God's grace in Christ softens hearts and loosens our grip on the idols that compete for our attention. The Gospel shapes how we see everything in life and

ministry, including how we understand politics, social action, ethics, mission, and more. If we want mission to be healthy and sustainable, we must be Gospel-Centered.

**Post #2: The Local Church.** The New Testament constantly emphasizes mission in the context of the local church. We can't be in mission to our friends, neighbors, and co-workers if we are not aligned with the local church. God has chosen the local church as His primary mission agency. Even with its challenges and flaws, the local church is God's mission outpost in the community. Jonathan LaBarge writes [here](#) about how important loving our church is, even when we may not like certain things about our church.

**Post #3: Equipping People.** The Local church that sees its people as missionaries will also be committed to equipping its people to be on mission. This means the church will disciple and train people to think, plan, and act like missionaries in their own unique mission contexts (where they work, play, live, etc.). This process is critical for churches that want to be in mission. They understand that it's not about getting people to come to church, but it's about equipping and sending people out into their lives ("as they are going," Matthew 28:18) as missionaries.

**Post #4: Mission in Community.** Note: not mission "in the community" but mission "in community." God intends mission to take place naturally and normally in relationships - in families, in the workplace, in the neighborhood, in places we frequent. My friend Mark puts it this way, "The Holy Spirit always works through the Word of God, *along the avenue of relationships.*" Mission is not for lone rangers, for pastors, or evangelists, or a small committee. Mission is for all the Baptized. Everyone gets to join in! Churches that use the name "evangelical" should think of themselves as "evangelistic," meaning every member is engaged in God's mission to and with others. Everyone has a role to play!

As you might guess, these four anchor posts are not unique to small towns, nor are they the only anchor posts that could be present. However, with these four firmly in place, your mission in your small town (or Alpha City) will have a solid base on which to support your missional actions.