

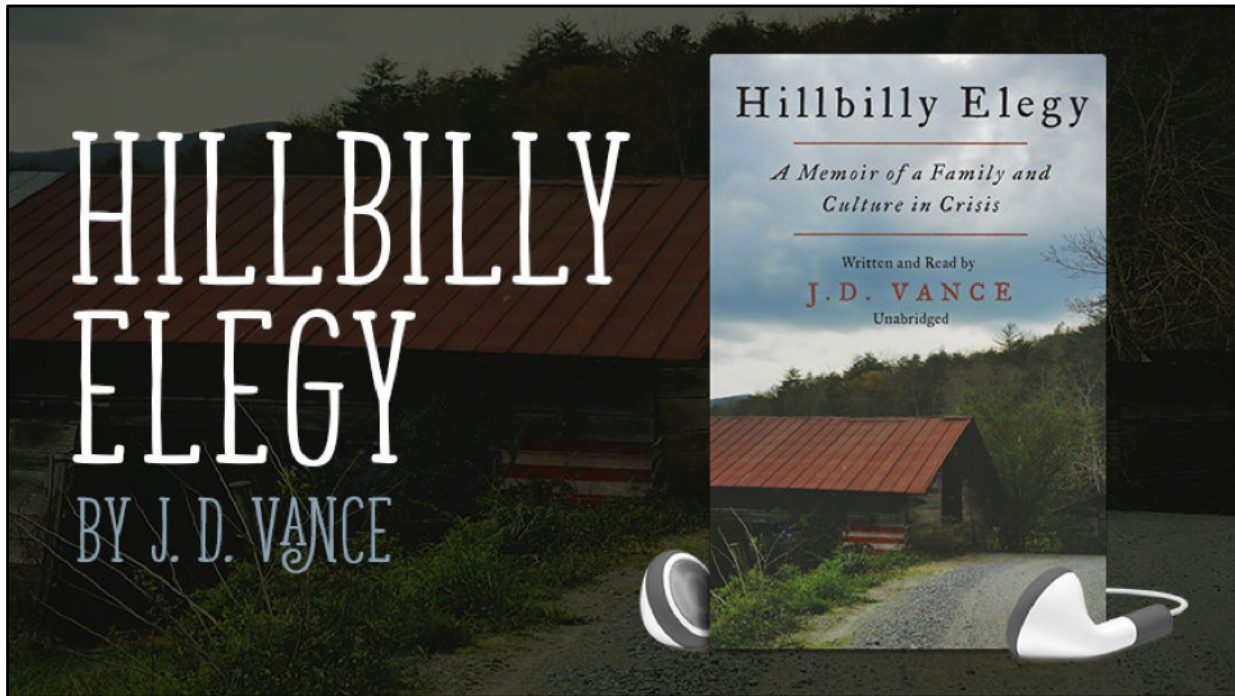


# The Church as a Rural Resource

Rural Matters Institute  
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This is Flo. She lives about 3 miles from me. She and her husband built this house over a period of 5 years when they were in their mid sixties. The two of them- just the two of them. She is everything I love about where I live. She has grit, she is talented. She loves Jesus and is very active in her church. She sewed the dress I wore to my son's wedding. I want to be Flo. She lives the story of rural America that we love. But there is another story.



It is a story really well told by JD Vance. How many of you have read Hillbilly Elogy? It isn't just a story of the rural south it is largely the story of rural America. At least one story that represents many others. It also had some really interesting research in it. When a book comes recommended by the National Review, the NY times the Washington Post, and the Economist it is probably worth reading. It has language that gets rough but I would recommend it to you.

## 3 Areas of Growing Concern in Rural Communities and the Tie that Binds Them



Health and Job Markets



Substance Abuse



Abuse within Families

JD Vance discusses what he refers to as a culture in crisis. For the next few minutes I want to talk with you about how the church can be a resource in what Vance accurately calls an often under-resourced area. I want to center the discussion around research in 4 key areas of need and then open us up for a discussion about how the church can stand in the gap. The areas I want to address are:



## Health and Job Markets

- Since 1969, the number of people moving from being employed by a company to being self-employed increased by 240% in rural areas.
- Rural Americans are among the most uninsured and underinsured people in the United States.

Let's begin with the under-resourced area of health services. We all know about the economic downturn in 2008 and that rural communities have been the last to recover from it. But I want to talk about another aspect of the economy that is an older issue with many health implications



## Health and Job Markets (continued)

- Even though the population is aging a whole range of health treatment options from hospitals, primary physicians, physical therapy and drug treatment centers are less accessible to them.
- More rural people per capita have heart disease, asthma, hypertension and mental disorders even when we control for age

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## Substance Abuse

- Prescription opioid use is growing fastest in Rural Areas
- Factors include:
  - Lower perceived risk
  - Greater use of emergency medical facilities where opioids are painkiller of choice
  - Limited alternatives such as physical therapy
  - Jobs that include more manual labor and injury
  - Criminality

It is important to note that while opioids use is growing fastest in rural areas Alcohol and alcohol abuse is still the number one issue in substance abuse



## Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

- Women in small rural areas report the highest level violence at 22.5% while women in isolated area report only 17.9%. Regardless, the violence is more severe than in suburban or urban areas.
- The mean distance to the nearest resource for a rural abused woman is **three times** farther than that of women in suburban or urban areas.
- When women report violence, it is likely that children also suffer.



# The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

- Assessed associations between childhood maltreatment and later life health and well being

Findings from the study suggest certain experiences are major risk factors for many of the nations worst health and social problems

Understanding these problems can help us prevent them

Robert Anda, MD MS

Co-principal investigator of Adverse Childhood Experiences Study



## ACE-Measured 10 Factors Highly Correlated with Mental Health and Substance Abuse

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Physical neglect
- Emotional neglect
- Mother treated violently
- Substance misuse within household
- Household mental illness
- Parental separation or divorce
- Incarcerated household member

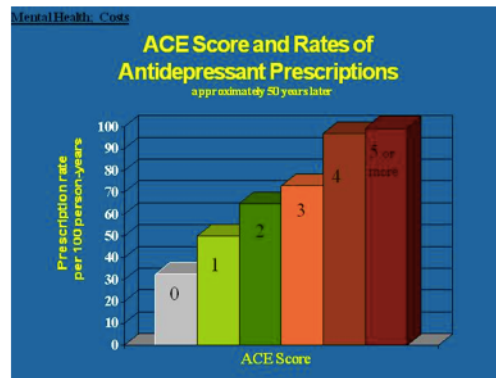
I've made a copy for each of you the survey that was used with adults to reflect on their childhood experiences. I thought it might be meaningful to take a minute and see how many of these questions each of us would answer yes to. Remember the qualifier is often.

# ACE Survey

This will be a handout not a slide – we will take a minute to score ourselves



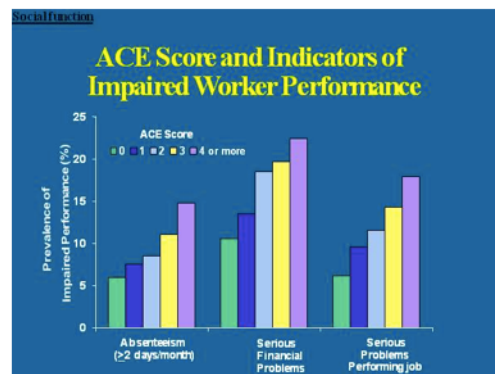
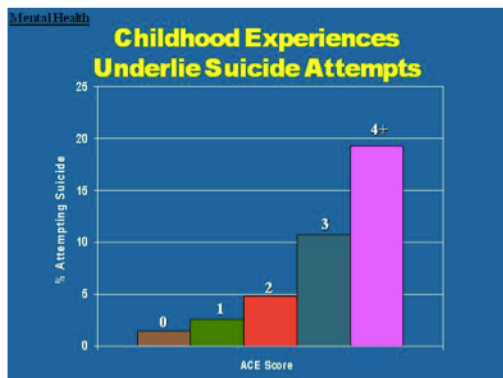
# What Does Your ACE Score Mean?



These charts are not my favorite the charts are not to scale so keep it in mind but still the significance is there and cannot be ignored



## ACE Scores of 1 – 4 and Health/Behavioral Issues



They were twice as likely to be smokers, 12 times more likely to have attempted suicide, seven times more likely to be alcoholic, and 10 times more likely to have injected street drugs.

People with high ACE scores are more likely to be violent, to have more marriages, more broken bones, more drug prescriptions, more depression, more auto-immune diseases, and more work absences.



## Rural ACE Scores

- ACEs are a significant problem among rural adults. Over half of rural residents reported some ACE exposure, and over one in ten reported high levels of exposure (four or more ACEs).
- Due to cultural taboos these are likely under-reported in rural areas
- Do to lack of treatment these are most likely underreported in rural context.

So what are the ACE scores like in rural areas

## What about the Rural Church?

- Our religion has changed. It is built around churches heavy on emotional rhetoric but light on the kind of social support necessary to enable poor kids to do well
- We report we attend church more than we actually do because there is shame in not attending.
- Religious institutions remain a positive force in peoples lives, but in a part of the country slammed by the decline of manufacturing, joblessness, addiction, and broken homes church attendance has fallen off (Valence, 2016, p. 93).
- The church offered a community of support for alcoholics that they weren't fighting alone, for other addictions, for parenting classes, job training, to come together to help one another financially "Religion offered tangible assistance to keep the faithful on track"





## **How Can the Church be More Than One Thing?**

- Addressing ACE – especially children and youth
- Addressing Health screeners
- Addressing addictive behaviors
- Addressing unemployment

# Religious Market Structure, Religious Participation, and Outcomes: Is religion good for you?

Johnathan Gruber (NBER Working Paper No. [11377](#)),

- Religious density significantly increased level of religious participation, and as well led to better outcomes according to several key economic indicators: higher levels of education and income, lower levels of welfare receipt and disability, higher levels of marriage, and lower levels of divorce.
- Bottom line: religious beliefs have tangible benefits.

The church is absolutely critical in a rural community. The church shares the good news, the church offers hope the church also can offer support to our bodies and minds. Our gospel should be thick with the redemption of all of life. Can your church be two things?