

The Lone Ranger Builds a Church
Leader's Guide

In the movie "Lilies of the Field" (1963), Sidney Poitier plays Homer Smith, an unemployed construction worker. When he happens upon a group of nuns who are working a farm and serving local people, in the American southwest, the Mother Superior sees him as an answer to her prayer for a chapel for the people who have no place to worship. Homer is eventually persuaded to do the work, supplies are obtained, and the work begins.

When the locals show up to help build their chapel, two problems come up that are common to all of us in the church. The solutions work for us, too.

Show the video clip. (Note re copyright: For information on licensing to show copyrighted movies, such as this one, see www.cvli.com.) Start either with the scene where Homer refuses to allow the people to help or, if your time is short, with the scene where Homer is sitting at the table while Mother Superior is writing a letter. Continue through the following outdoor scene.

1. In his conversation with Mother Superior, Homer justifies his refusal of help and his insistence on "building it myself" because of his life-long desire to "build something." What other good desires can we have that result in shutting others out?
Homer's 'good desire' was to build something. Other good desires that (intentionally or unintentionally) shut other people out are the desire to get it done quickly and the desire to do it 'well.' There are many others.
2. Mother Superior is not sympathetic in her reply: "God is building the chapel. You sit here feeling sorry for yourself because you are not Him?" How did she change the focus? Why does that change our perspective from "me" to "we"?
Most of the reasons we shut others out, even the good reasons, focus on 'me' – I want it done my way, in my time frame, so people will think well of me, so I get the feeling of accomplishment, etc. But when I focus on God instead of myself, and see him as the source, I become one of the people through whom he works. That attitude opens me up to working with others.
3. Homer then begrudgingly accepts their help, but refuses to provide leadership. For what reasons, some of them good reasons, do we also leave volunteers to figure things out of their own? What does a group of workers lack without leadership?
Being "too busy" is probably the most frequent reason we leave volunteers without a leader. Others may be mentioned, too. A leader provides a clear and unified vision, a plan, the support the workers need, and someone who keeps an eye out for problems.



4. Homer finally took his place as leader of the team when his friend reminded him of the purpose of the chapel. How often have you reminded the teams you lead of the purpose of their work? What difference does it make when we keep our purpose front and center?

*In the busyness of our task, it's easy to forget about the purpose behind it.
Purpose unites a group and takes the focus off our own egos.*

Note: This Leader's Guide is a free download from www.TheEquipper.org. A Participant's handout is also available on the website. Permission is given to copy and use these tools, without change, within your own church or other organization.

