
Why Rural Youth Ministry? 4 Reasons to say Why Not?

If you have worked in a rural context for more than five minutes, you can see that things are a little different here. The towns are smaller, farther apart, and seem to operate at a slower pace. Do not let all this deceive you. You have not stepped into 1940, 1960, or even 1990. You have not stepped into a smaller version of some small city. Relationships and rivalries run very deep. Resources can be as slim here in a rural context as you would see in many urban situations.

Despite all the differences, many things are similar – parents are still parents, and students are still students. Students still have many of the same struggles as their urban and suburban counterparts, such as drugs, teenage pregnancy, bullying, and truancy. Students still hurt. Parents still try and fill every spare moment with an activity, club, or sport.

With all these challenges before you, many will ask? Why bother with Rural Youth Ministry?

Here are 4 good reasons to say “Why Not Rural Youth Ministry?”

1) **Much of North America is rural.**

Many refer to rural communities as “flyover country,” giving the impression that the rural areas do not matter. However, large portions of North America are represented when you say the word rural. This includes a lot of students that attend small rural schools. The county where I live has about 1100 7th-12th grade students scattered among three school districts.

2) **Even though many small rural churches are closing, there will be rural churches around for many years to come.**

I have worked as a Youth Pastor in Southern Baptist churches for 13 years. The largest majority of churches in my denomination are under 500 in attendance. I have heard it said that the average size church in the SBC is about 350. This means that for every megachurch, there are many more small churches of less than 100, or even less than 50. Many other denominations have very similar numbers.

3) **Many rural youth ministries have smaller numbers of students, allowing more individual attention.**

One of my favorite parts of Rural Youth Ministry is the opportunity that I get to invest in the lives of students in one-on-one or small group interactions. With a smaller ministry size, I can slow down and focus on one or two students that really need that help through a tough situation, or rejoice with them in successes. I also get to experience a lot of “firsts.” There is a student that I have had the pleasure of being with the first time he left the state of Indiana (and we live 20 minutes from the state line) and the first time he ever flew on an airplane.

4) **We are given the mission and commission to “Go into all the world” – and this includes rural areas.**

One of the members of the leadership team at my church has said many times over the last few years, “God told us to go, that means we need His permission to stay.” In many rural areas there are so many needs that could be met with a few small resources, a person with a specific skill set, or a person willing to take the time to help another pick up the pieces of a broken life. The Gospel is needed in rural areas just as badly as in the prisons, urban centers, or wealthy suburbs. They are people Christ died for that need what only He can give.

Brent Lacy is a rural Youth Pastor at First Baptist Church in Rockville, Indiana, who lives in the “Covered Bridge Capital of the World” with his wife and 3 kids. You can find out more about his book [Rural Youth Ministry: Thrive Where You’re Planted at:](#)

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