

Below: I asked last week's guests, Mike Santiago, Aaron Burke and Greg Ford this question: "What can a Rural/Small church Pastor do that you can't do as a mega church pastor?"

Their responses are in bold.....

1. **Deeper ingrained into the life of the community.** The influence of the pastor in the community can be significant. First name basis with the community stake holders.... First name basis with the mayor, fire chief, coaches, principals and school superintendents.
2. **Greater agility-** small churches can pivot on ideas and programs faster... they are nimble and respond quicker not only to problems but opportunities.
3. **Faster decision making** - the larger the organization the slower the decision making process. We may come to the same the very same decision but it has more layers.
4. **Faster communication** -
5. **Closer community** – Pre-Covid -19, I went with one of my mega church pastor friends at a major sporting event. As we were walking out, a random guy yelled at him "Hey, there's my Pastor." My friend turned to me and had no clue who the guy was. So, I would say that I have a relationship with everyone where he was not able to have a relationship with everyone. I not only know their name but their stories as well.
6. **Simpler problem solving** -
7. **Extreme personal touch** – Show up in the moments and memories in their lives birthday parties, weddings, sports games.....
8. **Pastor their community**... larger church pastor their church. For the rural or small church, the town becomes his parish. God called you to pastor the town through the church.
9. **Small church can do ministry accompanied by their family**..... You know you're a small church pastor because you are married to the worship leader, WM's director and children's director. Kids play the drums, clean the church, mow the yard.... It's a family ministry.
10. **The ability to personally influence people for ministry.** Most of the pastoral influence is platform based. Influence is stronger in smaller settings. Young people personally know the pastor and often have opportunities to explore a sense of call to ministry
11. **Enjoy a broader variety of ministry as a traditional shepherd.** While mega-church is often focused on being a visionary - rural pastors get to spread their time out with preaching/teaching/care/counseling/administration. It is more people focused than system focused. Rural pastors have the opportunity to be generalists.

It's frustrating at times in terms of growth but it's also a blessing and keeps us sharp in discernment.

Other Insight from leaders

Dwight Sandos:

1. A rural pastor can know the community and the people who live there well. They can know the community leaders on a personal basis.
2. Pastors preach at multiple community events. Baccalaureate, Memorial Day, community Thanksgiving Services and prayers at celebrations etc. They may have more listeners and followers than they ever know

Keri Smith:

1. I have the opportunity of building relationships with people in the rural setting that a mega church pastor may not have.

David Herdon:

Know everybody's name and story. And I do mean everyone lol. Helps to know your audience when preaching

Greg Perkins:

1. A rural or small church pastor has a greater ability (or access) to develop relationships with a majority of their constituents. This translates to a better understanding of the existing needs or health of the church.
2. A rural or small church pastor typically is able to develop deeper relationships in the community at all levels of government and civic organizations and usually has more time available to be involved in community projects and initiatives alongside leaders and volunteers.

3. Generally speaking, rural/small church pastors have more time available, are more accessible to their people, and usually have more empathy toward what most church attendees experience day-to-day.

Janet Faggart:

Rural/Small church pastors can:

1. Literally pastor the whole community.
2. Access felt needs quickly across the whole community.
3. Mobilize people across denominations, even unchurched, because of the town's familiar culture.
4. Be visible in any manner the pastor desires...good or bad.

Brian Pounds:

Nobody ever wants to really admit that mega-church and rural church are just two completely different beasts and it takes two completely different kinds of people to survive as a pastor in each system. Anyway, these things can be frustrating when I get carried away with growth concerns, it I am also learning to settle for just who God made me to be and the blessings attached to my own place of ministry. I have much more to say but this is a start.

Rural pastor can...

- 1) Have deeper relationships with a larger portion of the congregation.
- 2) A rural pastor has an opportunity to pastor the entire community even though they may not ever be a part of his/her church. This only becomes a reality with longevity.
- 3) Focus on consistency rather than keeping up with changes. Rural people are different than city people in that regard. It's not about keeping up, but staying true. You can bring new ideas in time but keeping up with the times means little to true rural people.

I also want to mention, from my personal perspective, that the rural community cannot be confused with the bedroom community. This is another definite distinction that needs to be made. Bedroom communities (i.e. Rome, Decatur,) may have rural vibes but they are close enough to bigger systems they cannot lead the same. They have a unique beast all their own. More like big city thought that just doesn't want to dwell in the big city itself.

David Baze:

Regularly do work projects with guys from the church. Sit on the front porch for an hour and a half with the old guys who drop by to check on you when they come to town to get feed and drop off eggs.

All these seem mundane but are great opportunities to minister and be ministered to as well.

Jeb Dobson:

1) Have more hands on ministry opportunities with families outside of the church. Such as birthdays, anniversaries, Ciencenettas, and Graduations just to name a few.

2) More flexibility in services such as bring everybody to the front for specific prayer, or have a testimonial service.

3) Become well-rounded in ministry because you end up doing a lot more than what they teach you in Bible school. Building and vehicle maintenance, accounting, sound tech, multi media

4) Have a ministry outside of the church if you are bi-vocational.

Steve Bryant:

1. Personal connection with everyone is huge. All of my people get a call every two weeks.

2. My schedule is very flexible for any changes needed.

3. Low overhead expenses. Less stress.

4. Become known and involved quicker in the city or town.

5. With the current situation, even rural pastors have the same access to online ministries for their people.

Kent Anderson:

What Rural Pastors can do that a City Pastor can't.....Smaller isn't all bad.....

1. Typically has a better opportunity to be involved in the local school system- Small schools are looking for help- Find a subgroup to bless- bus drivers, nurse, teachers, etc.....

2. Can develop a closer relationship with other pastors in their town- Most small town pastors meet regularly- The possibility to work together is higher in rural settings.

6. Find their niche in community events- Small towns are always looking for help in their activities- Annual events, holiday events, etc.....

Pastor can be on the frontline of assimilation

Rusty Posey:

1. Walk through District Council without getting mobbed.
2. I have community wide influence in a smaller community with my work with the Chamber of Commerce. I'm not "competing" with other Mega Churches.
3. With less staff to manage, people pulling for my time, etc, I can be a part of more things.