



*Sustainable Youth Ministry: Why Most Youth Ministry Doesn't Last and What Your Church Can Do About It*

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Mark DeVries (*Family Based Youth Ministry*) is the founder of Youth Ministry Architects, a consulting team that assists churches in building sustainable youth ministries ([www.ymarchitects.com](http://www.ymarchitects.com)).

DeVries has served since 1986 as associate pastor for youth and their families at First Presbyterian Church in Nashville, Tennessee. He has trained youth workers on five continents and has taught courses or been a guest lecturer at a number of colleges and seminaries.

## Leading Youth Ministry Pastor & Consultant Shares Wisdom

### **Gambling Away the Ministry**

Most churches have chosen to do youth ministry with a model best described as gambling. The leadership crosses their fingers and believes that this time the cards will fall in their favor. Maybe this time they'll find just the right superstar youth director, just the right curriculum, or just the right volunteer that will, finally, make youth ministry work where it has never really worked before, at least not in a lasting way.

But wealth--just like sustainable youth ministry--comes predictably from the strategic, sacrificial and annoyingly inconvenient investment of time and resources.

### **The Anatomy of Stuckness**

Whether it's youth ministry, children's ministry or any other part of the church, you know you're spinning your wheels when you start asking these dead end questions:

What can keep us from failing?

Don't people understand how different we are?

Why can't my church understand that it's not about numbers?

How can I get out of all these political games?

### **The Dance Floor: A Systems Approach to Ministry**

Everyone likes to pick the wallpaper, but no one wants to pour the concrete. Everyone wants to dance, but no one wants to build the dance floor. Unfortunately, one of the secrets to sustainable ministry lies in the unglamorous, unappreciated work of building a firm infrastructure and smooth-functioning systems. Without it, the wallpaper is just glued to thin air. DeVries gives foundational pillars of any sustainable ministry.

### **Actually, Sometimes It is About Numbers**

Churches get mired in the old tired argument that ends up with someone angrily but piously seething, "It's not about numbers." But that's not entirely true. Sometimes it is. The two keys are: 1) discerning which numbers are important and 2) becoming the author rather than the victim of those numbers.