

DAVE BROWNING

HYBRID CHURCH

THE FUSION OF

INTIMACY
& IMPACT

Hybrid Church

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The Fusion of Intimacy and Impact

Dave Browning

A LEADERSHIP ✦ NETWORK PUBLICATION

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About Leadership Network

Leadership Network, an initiative of OneHundredX, exists to honor God and serve others by investing in innovative church leaders who impact the Kingdom immeasurably.

Since 1984, Leadership Network has brought together exceptional leaders, who are focused on similar ministry initiatives, to accelerate their impact. The ensuing collaboration—often across denominational lines—provides a strong base from which individual leaders can better analyze and refine their individual strategies. Creating an environment for collaborative discovery, dialogue, and sharing encourages leaders to extend their own innovations and ideas. Leadership Network further enhances this process through the development and distribution of highly targeted ministry tools and resources—including video, podcasts, concept papers, special research reports, e-publications, and books like this one.

With Leadership Network's assistance, today's Christian leaders are energized, equipped, inspired—and better able to multiply their own dynamic Kingdom-building initiatives.

In 1996 Leadership Network partnered with Jossey-Bass, a Wiley Imprint, to develop a series of creative books that would provide thought leadership to innovators in church ministry. Leadership Network Publications present thoroughly researched and innovative concepts from leading thinkers, practitioners, and pioneering churches. The series collectively draws from a wide range of disciplines, with

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- Enabling effective leadership
- Encouraging life-changing service
- Building authentic community
- Creating Kingdom-centered impact
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Preface

At a conference I attended, the facilitator said, “It’s more important to be kind than to be right.” At first the statement resonated with me. I’ve certainly seen rightness expressed at the expense of kindness. But upon further reflection, I think it was unfortunate that the conversation was being framed in terms of kindness versus rightness. Can’t we have both? I think a better statement would have been “It is important to be right. It is just as important to be kind.”

It’s okay to be extreme, but it’s not okay to be imbalanced. It was said of Abraham Lincoln that he was “a man of steel and velvet,” extremely strong at the core, with a very gentle exterior. It was said of Christ that He was “full of grace and truth,” completely truthful, but gracious. That is what I want to be when I grow up—both. And that is God’s dream for all of us in His church—that when we grow up we will “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:7–16). Greatness appears to be balanced extremes.

Balance is not very sexy or cool. What is deemed newsworthy is often excessive in one direction or another. The media tend to amplify the highly unlikely outliers and minimize the more commonplace “midliers.” This is true in Christianity as well. The ministry that is extremely (fill in the blank: *large*, *evangelistic*, *Calvinistic*, *dogmatic*, and so on) gets noticed. But for long-term effectiveness, balance yields the best results, in your personal life and in your ministry.

A wise older pastor advised me in my youth, “Lean against the prevailing wind.” He had used this phrase as a sextant for his

personal life, his leadership, and his teaching. “If you find yourself preaching about grace all the time,” he counseled, “maybe balance that with a message on holiness. If you’ve focused for a while on outreach, teach on discipleship.” So much of spirituality, he told me, is both/and, not either/or.

This book is about *both* instead of *either*, about *and* instead of *or*. Its focus is what is right with the church, from pole to pole—from the biggest, most impacting megachurch to the smallest, most relational microchurch. But instead of taking you toward one pole or the other, this book will lead you on an expedition to both extremes simultaneously.

My hope is that the book’s tone will be conciliatory. Before my first book, *Deliberate Simplicity*, was published, I was told that the publisher liked its tone. The publisher felt that the book was gracious toward the traditional church even while drawing contrasts with it. I was happy to hear this. In the foreword to that book, I wrote: “God is at work in every church, and in every church tradition there are elements that work well for the people in those traditions. We all have to be faithful to what God is calling us to be and do.” I still feel this way. My prayer would be that this book will become known not just for the ideas presented here but also for the manner in which they are presented.

We are called to experience and express the grace of God. There is no question that we have experienced grace. The question is, will we express it? And we need to extend grace in matters of style as well as in matters of sin. The church that I pastor, Christ the King Community Church, has become noted for being a place of grace for sinners. We tell you, without reservation, “There is always a place for you.” We don’t care where you’ve been or what you’ve done; we say, “God will take you where you are, He just won’t leave you there.” We believe there is forgiveness for the past and hope for the future. There is no question about how we feel about sinners. We love them, and love covers a multitude of sins. The question is, will we extend the same kind of grace to someone who differs from us in style? In other words, will love also cover a multitude of styles?

Thomas Jefferson put it so well when he said, “In matters of style, swim with the current; in matters of principle, stand like a rock.” This has proved to be a difficult balance for Christians to maintain. We have tended first to gravitate toward certain styles (in preaching, music, liturgy, programming), and then to imagine that our preferred methodology must be “right,” and then to become cynical, critical, or judgmental of others for being different. We imagine that the way God is at work in our story is the only way God could ever be at work. And in our efforts to validate our own method of ministry there is often a temptation to invalidate another’s. We must resist this temptation. As Jefferson noted, style is an area where we want to see diversity, not unity. We want to be loyal to Master and mission, not to method and manner.

I have found that many believers have a wrong notion about Christian unity. We confuse unity with uniformity. Uniformity involves looking for little things we have in common with others, creating a group around those commonalities, drawing distinctions between the newly created group and others who do not share these points of affinity with us, and then increasingly insisting that others be like us in order to be in our company. But that is not creating Christian unity. That is creating worldly uniformity. And, frankly, anyone can do it, which is why everyone is doing it. But Christian unity means embracing diversity within the will of God (see 1 Corinthians: 12). Do you see the difference? Within God’s will there is grace for differences in personality and presentation.

Can you appreciate a sermon that is preached in a style different from the one you prefer? Can you worship with a song that isn’t your favorite? Can you talk up a denomination that isn’t yours? If not, you may need to take some of the grace that you have for sin and apply it to style.

It’s a shame that the different wings of the church often look askance at one another. Imbalanced perspectives about ministry size have proved particularly corrosive to unity. Small churches tend to invalidate larger ones, and vice versa. As G. K.

Chesterton has noted, this imbalance is based on the phenomenon of “knowing what you know” and being far too confident about the rest: “If a man lives alone in a straw hut in the middle of Tibet, he may be told that he is living in the Chinese Empire; and the Chinese Empire is certainly a splendid and spacious and impressive thing. Or alternatively he may be told that he is living in the British Empire, and be duly impressed. But the curious thing is that in certain mental states he can feel much more certain about the Chinese Empire that he cannot see than about the straw hut that he can see.”¹

If we would come out of the bunkers that we have created with our mission statements and philosophies of ministry, we might find that there is something to be learned from our brothers and sisters who do things differently. In this book I contend that God works in different ways at different times and places. Rick Warren likes to say that he’s neither right wing nor left wing but “for the whole bird.” When a congregation stretches its wings toward intimacy and impact, it experiences greater lift.

This is a book about the church having its cake and eating it, too. I hope you don’t believe the extremists who say, “You have to pick your poison as a church. You either are going to be big and impacting or small and intimate.” Or if you do believe that, I hope you won’t still believe it after reading this book. If you are tempted to buy into that either/or thinking, this book will point you in the direction of a beautiful blend. You don’t have to choose. In fact, you don’t *want* to choose. Both perspectives are critical. You should value both. You should pursue both. You need both. You should enjoy both. This is a book about having the best of both worlds, in a hybrid church.

August, 2010

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dave". The signature is stylized with a large, looping initial letter and a long, thin tail that extends downwards.

Acknowledgments

Many mentors have steered me over the years. I want to acknowledge a few whose direction is embedded in *Hybrid Church*.

Dr. Jerry Prevo is the longtime pastor of the Anchorage Baptist Temple (ABT). I never got to know him personally, but ABT was the first megachurch I ever noticed as a kid growing up in Anchorage, Alaska, and it made me want every church to be noticed. As a young man, I was greatly impressed by the magnitude of the ministry. A fleet of buses picked children up from around the city. A choir that was bigger than most other churches backed up the singing. Thousands of people were engaged in dozens of ministries. ABT operated a Christian school (I was a student there for a few years). ABT was on television and on the radio. It was a big church that did things in a big way. That church significantly expanded the horizons of my thinking about what was possible for the church.

At the other end of the spectrum, in terms of scale but not significance, is Phil Ellis. Phil led the first small group in which I ever participated, a men's recovery group in which I experienced a fair amount of personal healing. Phil led me on my first foray into vulnerability. I experienced things in that group that are still reverberating in me today. Phil was particularly transparent, and he engendered the sort of safe environment in which we would all want to grow.

I made my first pilgrimage to Willow Creek in the early 1990s. What I remember, more than Willow Creek's mall-like

campus, complete with a food court, was Bill Hybels and his unparalleled heart for people. Bill's passion for lost people blew away my skeptical stereotypes about what made megachurch leaders tick.

A one-day Serendipity workshop led by Lyman Coleman lit a fire for community in me, and that fire burns to this day. The idea of convening people in small groups as an *inherently valuable* activity had never really occurred to me before that workshop. The idea that church was essentially community, and the idea that average people could lead the church if it was organized in smaller pockets—these are big ideas that continue to inspire me.

Carl George's "metachurch" language never really caught on, but his *both/and* concepts certainly did, at least with me. Over the years, I have accumulated a lot of tools in my ministry toolbox, but the ones that George gave me fit my hand the best and have allowed me to accomplish the most. George saw value in both small and large gatherings of the church. He lobbied for an ecosystem of different-size conventions that would meet different needs in different ways.

G. K. Chesterton was a sage who argued eloquently against materialism, relativism, and agnosticism—corrosive ideas that took over the twentieth century. He defended the common man, and common sense. He was a proponent of the family. He was an advocate of beauty. But he also had some insights into organization, and these were particularly salient. He called his theory of government *distributism*. Distributism is based on widespread ownership of property. It means self-support, self-control, and self-government. It means people producing and using their own goods, making their own laws, and being interdependent with their neighbors. Chesterton's theory of distributism transcends economics. It is the notion of independent landowners, craftsmen, and merchants with an interest in taking part in civic life, and the economic ability to do so. It may be the sanity that the church will be looking for in the next century.

As a composite, these leaders embody the impact and the intimacy that we want to see in the church today. By “we” I mean Christian leaders who are tired of one-dimensional approaches to Christianity—tired of the idea that it’s all one way or the other. By “we” I mean Christian leaders who want to hear the church in stereo. By “we” I mean Christian leaders who want to hold two ideas at the same time—that the church can be personal, and that the church can be powerful.

Introduction to Both

Carl George, the church futurist, predicted nearly twenty years ago that extremely large churches would emerge in America in the twenty-first century, and that individual churches in this country would resemble either elephants or fields of mice.¹ But elephants and mice can both do damage, if in different ways.

The assessment of Tony Dale, a microchurch expert, is that the mice are multiplying: “Our read of what is going on is that millions of Christians are moving in a simple, organic direction.” Dale may actually have understated this trend. The number of people convening weekly in microchurches is in the *tens* of millions. These churches go by different names—cell church, house church, organic or simple church. Their congregations include as few as three to five people and as many as thirty. Some of the microchurch movements include homeschooling networks, biblical worldview groups, spiritual discipline groups, Christian creative arts guilds, and various marketplace ministries. As a result of random telephone research, George Barna estimates that as many as 9 percent of adults in the United States have had some experience with a microchurch.² And a recent Pew study backs up Barna’s research, indicating that 7 percent of adults have their primary worship experience in a home or a small group.³ If there are two hundred million adults in the United States, this comes to fourteen million, of whom ten to twelve million are Christians.

This trend may not be obvious, because the groups are dis-united and disorganized (the largest of the more organized

groups account for fewer than three million people). But it is precisely because these groups are not being coordinated that Dale calls the organic church “a Holy Spirit movement . . . no one but Him has enough influence to bring it about.”

At the other end of the scale, the large churches are becoming even larger. Congregations of ten thousand or more people are becoming more common in the United States, with Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas, approaching fifty thousand per weekend. There are over 1,700 megachurches nationwide; the typical Protestant congregation has at least two thousand people in a typical weekend. These megachurches are growing not just in number but also in size. They had an average growth rate of 50 percent over five years, and more than 20 per cent of megachurches experienced an increase of 100 percent in a five-year period. Only 10 per cent of megachurches showed stagnation or decline.⁴

This book validates both of these trends and looks to connect the two in ways that can be synergistic. When we take a more holistic view, we see that large churches can become significant hubs in the emerging diverse, organic ecosystem of the church. And when we see the bigger picture, we understand that smaller bodies are excellent at building deep, meaningful, personal relationships and can become part of a grander story that is transforming the spiritual landscape.

Both Are Church

The church for which I am the lead pastor, Christ the King Community Church (CTK), numbers tens of thousands of participants, but I feel the need to chase that statement with another. We are one church that meets in many locations—and most of our congregations are quite small.

I guess I hasten to add this because, for me, it’s not all about being big. It’s also about being small. In fact, I would say that CTK has become big, not by being good at being big but by

being good at being small. Our vision statement calls on us “to see a prevailing, multilocation church emerge that will transform the spiritual landscape,” and we pledge to “convene in thousands of small groups with Worship Centers strategically located in every community.” Our vision, in miniature, is “transformation through multiplication.”

Because CTK is a network of small as well as large gatherings, we get included in lists of megachurches and microchurches alike. That is, we sometimes find ourselves lumped in with other churches of great scale because of our cumulative attendance, and yet, because small groups are the basic building block of our church, we are also sometimes characterized as a cell church or a house church. But we don’t fit comfortably into either category. Whereas most churches are one or the other, we are both. We are a hybrid.

I’ve used the word *hybrid* so often to describe the blend that is CTK that it is probably about time that I define exactly what it is that our church brings together. We are not combining just smallness with largeness but also two things that are much more significant. We are fusing *intimacy* (a personal, relational, transparent church) and *impact* (a powerful, relevant, and transformative church) to create a third form, and that is what a hybrid is. If you were to listen to people talking about our church, you would hear them revealing their preference for one aspect over the other, often by discounting the other. “I feel lost in a big church” is another way of saying, “I appreciate intimacy.” “I want to go somewhere where my friends will be impressed” is a way to say, “I desire a place of impact.”

If you were to meet some CTK participants (we don’t have “members” but “active participants”), you would hear them tell varied stories about what they appreciate about CTK. One might say, “This is the first church where I have really gotten to know people, and where people have gotten to know me. I have grown so much because of my small group.” Another might say, “I enjoy the weekend worship services. I feel the presence of

God when we get together.” Still another might say, “I love the fact that we are reaching out and starting new Worship Centers in new communities.” The point is that people do not experience CTK as one thing or the other but as both, as a combination that is a powerful hybrid.

A hybrid is a form that serves a transitional function. Between epochs, for example, we often find transitional forms that reach simultaneously back into the past and forward into the future. This is likely true right now for the automotive industry as refined fossil fuels become less plentiful and alternative forms of power, such as electricity and hydrogen, become more useful. Some people would see the hybrid church in the same light, understanding it to be a way station between the corporate, programmatic church (like the combustion engine, a popular but endangered species) and the smaller house fellowships that are projected to replace it eventually.

But I personally do not view the hybrid church as a transitional form. I view it as a preferred design. It brings two things together in a synergistic way. We prefer the two together because the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. When the church combines intimacy and impact, it gives us the best of both worlds.

Both Are Valid

Today, microchurches and megachurches alike are meeting needs and growing in popularity. Churches are getting smaller and larger at the same time. Each of these approaches to church is succeeding because of its respective strengths—intimacy for the microchurch, and impact for the megachurch. As Chesterton opines, both can and should be celebrated:

A man may say, “I like this vast cosmos, with its throng of stars and its crown of varied creatures.” But if it comes to that, why should not a man say, “I like this cozy little cosmos, with its

decent number of stars and as near a provision of live stock as I wish to see?" One is as good as the other; they are both mere sentiments. It is mere sentiment to rejoice that the sun is larger than the earth; it is quite as sane a sentiment to rejoice that the sun is no larger than it is. A man chooses to have an emotion about the largeness of the world; why should he not choose to have an emotion about its smallness?⁵

In the modern world, "Bigger and better" has been the rallying cry. Yet it has proved perilous to discount the small. Christensen chronicles the fall of Seagate, a former industry leader in hard disk drives.⁶ Seagate toppled because the company was building larger and faster drives for mainframe users and missed the shift to handheld devices and minicomputers that require smaller drives. According to Peters, corporate culture itself is undergoing a shift toward smallness in our interconnected global economy:

- Fewer than 1 in 10 Americans now work for a Fortune 500 company.
- The number No. 1 private employer in the United States, by body count, is no longer GM or AT&T. It's Manpower, Inc., the temporary work mega agency.
- Between 16 and 25 million of us are freelancers or independent contractors. There are now three million temps—including temp lawyers, temp engineers, temp project managers, and even temp CEOs.
- Microbusinesses, defined as companies that employ four or fewer people, are home to as many as 27 million of us.⁷

Likewise, the number of microchurches is likely to grow as political and financial pressures mount against the corporate church. But we should not imagine that large corporations have been eradicated from the face of the earth, or that they will

be eradicated any time soon. The same people who are pursuing an organic lifestyle are drinking Starbucks coffee, wearing Nike tennis shoes, and flying across the country on Boeing airplanes. The fact is, we can be well served by both the organic and the organizational, by the small and the large.

Participants in megachurches are excited about their churches, which offer quality programming, specialized staffs, and generous facilities. At the same time, and with just as much enthusiasm, those who are participants in microchurches laud the personal connectedness, care, and attention they experience in smaller fellowships.

Grant Fishbook, pastor of CTK in Bellingham, Washington, offers a directional comparison between intimacy and impact. “Impact is a springboard,” he says. “Intimacy is a diving board. Impact pushes you forward. Intimacy gives you a chance to plumb the depths.”

The relative contributions of megachurches and microchurches remind me of the story about a man who was looking at a river and asked a local man, standing nearby, “Is this the Mississippi?” “It’s part of it,” the local replied. The story is relevant to Christ’s church. We want to imagine that what we’re looking at is “it.” And it is. But it’s not *all* of it. Christ’s church is bigger and broader than a single point in space or time, and than a single point of view.

I am a proponent of relational evangelism. I understand my primary mission field to be those in my relational circle of influence. It seems to me that evangelism works well in a relational context. But I am nevertheless very happy that my father-in-law became a Christian at a Billy Graham crusade in Los Angeles. It’s not all one way or another.

Unfortunately, the simultaneous growth in participation at megachurches and microchurches has been accompanied by a growing sense of distrust and animus between these two wings of the church. In early 2009 I was invited to a meeting of megachurch and microchurch leaders in Orlando, Florida. There

were about fifty key leaders in attendance. Some were from the largest churches in America (those whose attendance is greater than five thousand). Others were from the smallest microchurches in America. During the two-day discussion, we talked about how big churches can support little churches, and vice versa. But the conversation was largely superficial until the very last hour, when something significant happened. One of the microchurch pastors turned to one of the megachurch pastors and asked, “What do you need from us? What do you want from the house church?” Without skipping a beat, the megachurch pastor said, “Grace. We need grace. Quit throwing stones at the megachurch. Quit launching grenades. We need grace. We love people and want to see them become followers of Christ. We just do it in a different way than you. We need grace.”

Up until that point, there had been an elephant in the room. We were talking about how to work together, but we didn’t much trust each other. As I think about what happened in that room between those two pastors, the word that comes to mind—maybe a synonym for grace—is *validation*. It is incumbent upon members of the body of Christ to validate other members. What that large-church pastor was saying was “I need you to validate my ministry.” Small-church pastors are also longing to be validated by large-church pastors.

There’s a need for us to look at what others are doing and say, “Isn’t that great!” As Paul explains in 1 Corinthians 12:21, the eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” God works in different ways at different times and places—and note that it’s *ways*. We waste our time trying to figure out the one “way” in which God is at work. God is the head of the body. He is at work in various ways in people’s lives.

The megachurch-microchurch contrasts are not theological or spiritual. They are philosophical and methodological. As near as I can tell, the people who participate in megachurches and microchurches love Jesus. They want His kingdom to come

and His will to be done on earth, and they feel called to what they are doing. As near as I can tell, they are all interested in carrying out the great commission (though they may emphasize different aspects of it).

Both Are Effective

Both the megachurch and the microchurch can be effective. Of course, both can be ineffective as well, but I'm going to stick with the positive here—the megachurch and the microchurch done well.

A healthy, vibrant megachurch can have a great impact on you as a participant. I still remember vividly the message that Bill Hybels preached at a service I attended at Willow Creek Community Church. The video, the drama, the lighting, and the sound all came together to drive home Bill's message about reaching out to the prodigals among us. But I also remember being in a home group one night when a couple opened up about their marriage and how they were struggling. Our group literally surrounded that couple that night and interceded for them.

Military commanders are trained to look for force multipliers on the battlefield, circumstances that can give an army a two-, three-, or even fourfold advantage. Such things as weather or morale can be force multipliers. (In fact, before D-day, General Dwight D. Eisenhower spent much of his time coordinating with meteorologists to get a read on the weather.) If two armies are equivalent but one has the wind at its back, which one has the better chance of succeeding? If two armies are equivalent but one is well rested and well fed, which one would you choose? Force multipliers allow an army to “tilt” the battlefield—instead of struggling harder to climb uphill, the troops roll downhill.

Microchurches and megachurches harness different winds as force multipliers. Force multipliers for the microchurch include these factors:

1. *Prayer*. When you have a chance to share who you really are and what is going on with you, the prayers of others become much more powerful. In the CTK story, we have experienced the power of thousands of groups gathering every week and interceding for the work that needs to be done. Prayer moves the hand of God, and when God is with you, miraculous things come from ordinary inputs.
2. *Christ-centeredness*. Jesus himself tipped us off to a force multiplier: “If I be lifted up, I will draw all men to me.” Lift up Christ. Worship him. Teach him. Enjoy him. When Christ is made the honored guest, when people get their eyes on Jesus and off other things, the results are renewal, life change, and spiritual refreshment.
3. *Comfortableness*. G. K. Chesterton said, “Angels can fly because they take themselves lightly.”⁸ Are you taking yourself and your ministry too seriously? If so, lighten up. Smile. Relax. Enjoy. As in sports, everything seems easier when you are loose. Laughter is characteristic of healthy families, and of healthy house churches.

And here are some of the force multipliers for megachurches:

1. *Faith*. Is the glass half full or half empty? Many megachurches are led by extraordinary visionaries who see the glass as half full. They are trusting God that large numbers of people will be swept into the kingdom of heaven. Their enthusiasm is infectious.
2. *Momentum*. Success begets success. When something goes well, and you celebrate that, you tend to encourage more of the same. Why is it that some teams tend to win season after season, and others tend to lose? They’re practiced in victory. Once you get used to winning, you start planning on it and preparing for it. Many successful megachurches have created a positive momentum that continues to propel them into the future.

3. *Creativity.* The creativity of the megachurch is astounding. Staging, video, lighting, sound effects—it all goes to break up the monotony and make church a place where people want to go.

Both Are Imperfect

The proponents of one model of ministry or the other may trumpet its benefits, but neither the megachurch nor the microchurch is without flaws. Navigating between these flaws calls to mind Odysseus moving through the narrow passage between Scylla and Charybdis in Homer's *The Odyssey*: there is a sea monster on one side and a deadly whirlpool on the other.

When it comes to models of ministry, on one side is the danger of becoming a club. Small churches possess an ability to foster close friendships, but there are fewer people and resources with which to work. It is also sometimes difficult for the smaller assembly to muster a quality presentation from a shallow talent pool. Moreover, a small assembly can easily become insulated and ingrown, its agenda susceptible to being hijacked by the loudest voice in the group. In addition, a ministry that does not engage in making more disciples of Jesus Christ becomes inwardly focused and comes to resemble a club more than church. There are many churches of this kind—75 percent of the churches in America did not see a single convert come to Christ last year. Admittedly, there are other problems to work on, but Christ's instructions to go into the world and make disciples should not be overlooked.

On the other side is the danger of becoming a crowd. Megachurches attract crowds of people and sizable resources, but the people are often passive spectators instead of active participants. As the work of those "onstage" takes on greater importance, it becomes easier to get lost in the crowd. When a ministry becomes effective in reaching out to lost people but does not maintain an authentic Christian core, it can become

a crowd instead of a church. Community is what makes the difference between a crowd and a church. If you get a bunch of people in a room and there is no connection between them, it's a crowd. If you get a bunch of people in a room and there is relationship, it's a church.

The lesson here is that it's possible to be effective in reaching out to large numbers of unchurched people, but without a sufficient Christian community into which they can be assimilated, it's just a greater concentration of darkness rather than an act of drawing people out of darkness and into the light. Evangelism and discipleship must work together in partnership.

Both Are Misunderstood

Large churches often view small churches as anemic runts. But that's not necessarily what they are. Bliese describes the small congregation as carrying out a unique mission: "The myth of size assumes that small churches are de facto struggling, parochial, maintenance-oriented, at risk, and not able to compete in today's church marketplace. . . . Breaking the myth of size means realizing that small churches are not necessarily premature, illegitimate, malnourished or incomplete versions of 'real' churches. Small congregations are the right size to be all that God calls a church to be."⁹ It's also true that small churches are thought to be better than they really are at some tasks, such as discipleship. But the dirty little secret of the microchurch is that house church participants are not particularly generous. Tony Dale says that house church participants tithe at only a small fraction of the amounts tithed by their megachurch counterparts.

But myths about the megachurch also abound. Thumma and Travis debunk several such myths, including the myths that megachurches are driven by personality cults, water down the faith, and grow because of the "worship show."¹⁰ And Carlos Whittaker, director of service programming at Buckhead

Church, one of the North Point Community Church campuses in the Atlanta area, blogged as follows in response to myths he has encountered as a megachurch staff member:

Myth: You can't find real relationships in a mega-church

Truth: You were not in my living room Sunday night with Heather, Zach, Meghan, and I.

Myth: Mega-Churches are a mile wide and an inch deep.

Truth: I dive deeper into the core of who this church is every week and have yet to even see the bottom. When you figure out how to love your neighbor then maybe we will dive into the hermeneutical Hebrew apostolic translations.

Myth: Mega-Churches have it all figured out.

Truth: They hired me. If this was true. It no longer is.

Myth: Because they pay musicians to play on Sunday morning, there is not as much "heart" on stage.

Truth: A paycheck does not forfeit love for God. Honestly, you not only have musicians that "have heart" on stage, you now have musicians that can play their instruments well.

Myth: Mega-Churches are built on a man. The main communicator.

Truth: I have not heard one baptism video on Sunday morning with the line "I accepted Andy Stanley into my heart and am telling the world I am living the rest of my life for him!"

Myth: Mega-Church staffs are corporate, non-relational, and stiff.

Truth: Ummmmmmmmmmmm

Myth: Mega-Churches are too uptight with their money and should just give it all away.

Truth: Please find me the verse that says churches are supposed to be stupid with their money. I am more grateful than ever to have the financial teams we have at NPML.

Myth: Mega-Churches should spend their money rescuing orphans with all their dollars instead of building fancy buildings.

Truth: They should rescue orphans. They should also rescue Bob the 38 year old banker who lives off of Tower Place Drive in Buckhead.

Myth: 70% of all male staff try to look like Rob Bell.

Truth: OK. You got us. This one is true.¹¹

Megachurches are typically thought to be quite evangelistic, with large numbers of converts each year. But that's not necessarily so, either. The dirty little secret of the megachurch (although it's not really such a secret) is that the vast majority of their growth comes from Christians transferring from other local churches in their areas. Extensive research by Schwarz found that "the evangelistic effectiveness of mini-churches is statistically 1600 percent greater than that of the mega-churches" and that large size is one of the most negative factors in relation to church growth, if by "growth" we mean conversion growth.¹²

Both Are Biblical

The Church Growth Movement has come to associate bigger churches with better churches. Chesterton notes this fallacy that attends size: "There is unfortunately one fallacy here into which it is very easy for me to fall, even those who are most intelligent and perhaps especially those who are most imaginative. It is the fallacy of supposing that because an idea is greater in the sense of larger, that it is greater in the sense of more fundamental and fixed and certain."¹³

Throughout scripture, you see God at work in ways both big and small, with both intimacy and impact. He parts the sea, and He fills the water pot. The God who thunders also speaks in whispers. He wins with armies of hundreds of thousands, or an army of one. The Bible often celebrates small things: little David, not the giant Goliath; Gideon's small band, not the enemy hordes; the widow's mite, not the Pharisee's largesse; the cup of cold water in His name, not the grandstand play.

In God's economy, there is beauty in both the large and the small. He inhabits the tiny seed as well as the towering redwood. God works with the small and the big. He used Samson both when he was wearing a size XXL T-shirt and later in life, when he wore a size S T-shirt. In the Bible, the biggest people often hold on to something small. As Lucado recounts, "Moses had a staff. David had a sling. Samson had a jawbone. Rahab had a string. Mary had some ointment. Aaron had a rod. Dorcas had a needle."¹⁴

The early church, we read, met "house to house and in the temple courts"—in both places. The first-century church resembled the architecture of the Internet, an architecture of small pieces loosely joined. It convened in smaller private spaces, but it also assembled corporately in larger public spaces. Believers were getting their needs met in smaller gatherings, but they were also making a splash in the community in large conventions.

So if the megachurch and the microchurch are both biblical, then we need to embrace them both. God's truth is often in stereo: fellowship and worship, freedom and accountability, grace and holiness, justice and mercy, evangelism and discipleship, community and outreach. Smith cites a rabbinical teaching to describe the relationship:

A king had some empty glasses. He said: "If I pour hot water into them they will crack; if I pour ice-cold water into them they will also crack!" What did the king do? He mixed the hot and the cold water together and poured it into them and they did not crack. Even so did the Holy One, blessed be He, say: "If I create the world on the basis of the attributes of mercy alone, the world's sins will greatly multiply. If I create it on the basis of the attributes of justice alone, how could the world endure? I will therefore create it with both the attributes of mercy and justice, and may it endure!"¹⁵

In isolation, neither side is, as Chesterton said, "quite right enough to run the whole world."¹⁶

Both Are Beautiful

When people realize that I am a pastor, they routinely ask, “How big is your church?” Innocent curiosity is what leads most of them to ask. What they may not realize, however, is that size is actually a significant variable that accounts for a large number of differences among churches. George says that the differences between and among tiny, small, medium, large, and extra-large churches is akin to the differences between and among mice, cats, dogs, horses, and elephants.¹⁷ Holmes spent a year investigating her one-fifth-acre backyard in suburban Portland, Maine, and wrote a book about her adventure of discovering the wild kingdom of ants, spiders, ladybugs, and crows.¹⁸ God’s acts are astonishing, even when set forth in miniature. At the other end of the scale, one of my favorite memories is of going “backstage” at a zoo in Hyderabad, India, and coming face to face with a Bengal tiger. Mere inches (and steel bars) separated us. This singular experience was astonishing precisely because of the magnitude of the animal. There’s a “wow” factor with a tiger that you don’t get with a kitten.

In nature, beauty can be found in the big and the small, and the same is true of social organizations like the church. Ultimately, it is not about numbers. It is about people. It is about fulfilling the great commission and bringing people out of darkness into God’s marvelous light. In that sense, the greatest intimacy is intimacy with God, and the greatest impact is the impact of God. Intimacy with God is what turns into impact, and the impact of God is what turns into intimacy.

Larger churches are able to facilitate the mission by providing services and options to a variety of age groups and needs, by providing economies of scale, and by providing competent staff and specialists. Smaller churches are able to facilitate the mission by providing personal time and attention, and by providing responses tailored to needs. It’s all good.

1

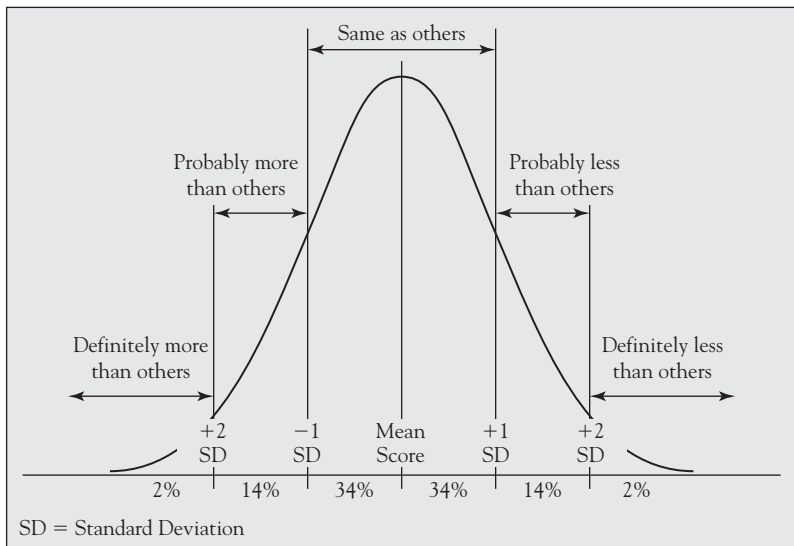
THE EXTREME WORLD

Kristyn, my wife, after talking with her sister Robyn, asked me if I had heard about the Extremely Focused Church conference in Colorado (her sister was going to it). I told her I hadn't heard about it. After some research, I realized she was talking about the Externally Focused Church conference (which I had heard about). But of the two conference names (one made up, one real), I like the sound of the Extremely Focused Church conference better, and that's saying a lot, because the idea of being externally focused resonates with me a great deal. There is something to be said for being extreme, particularly in our new world, which is filled with well curves and hybrids.

It's a Well-Curve World

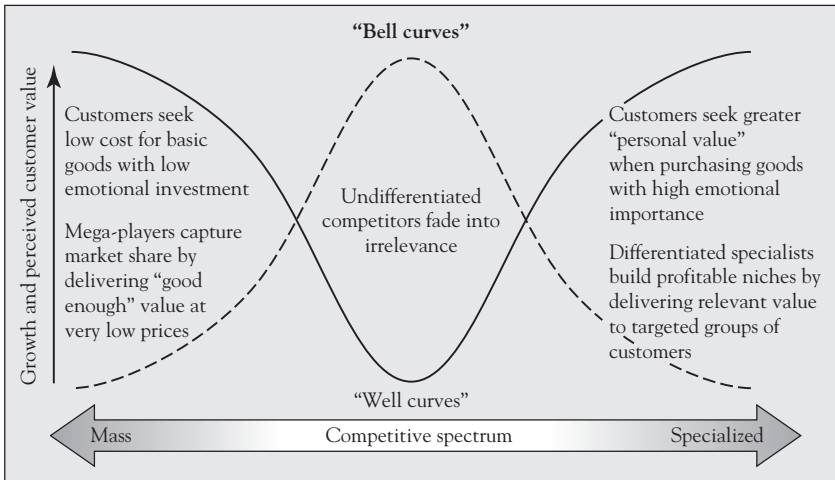
The bell curve is a statistical distribution pattern showing how the majority of people who are studied in terms of a particular social phenomenon will gravitate toward the middle of a range of outcomes. For example, most people have families of moderate size, are of moderate height, and get average grades. Because there are fewer extremely large families, and fewer extremely tall or short people, and fewer people who earn A's or F's, the data pertaining to these phenomena, plotted on a chart, take the form of a bell. Figure 1.1 shows a typical bell curve.

For decades, American business and culture have been formed to meet the needs of the middle range of consumers. The mass media have also been pointed toward the center. We have loved the word *general* in business—General Mills, General Motors, General Dynamics, General Electric. Mainstream culture has been organized around the general masses.

Figure 1.1 A Typical Bell Curve

When it comes to churches, however, mainline denominations do not command the position they used to. Over the past decade, a bimodal pattern has been emerging as sociological gravitations have moved toward the ends of a surveyed range and away from the middle. Pink has used the term *well curve* to describe this new trend: “Although bell curve distribution is still considered normal, a surprising number of economic and social phenomena now seem to follow a different arc. Instead of being high in the center and low on the sides, this new distribution is low in the center and high on the sides. Call it the well curve” (see Figure 1.2).¹

The well curve describes a world that is getting bigger and smaller at the same time. And the middle is falling out (for example, the middle class and middle management), and the extremes are becoming even more extreme (the lower and upper classes). Homes, television sets, and media are all getting larger and smaller at the same time. Bell-shaped curves are giving way to well-shaped curves, where the middle is not the high point but rather the low point. The extremes are the

Figure 1.2 The Well Curve

Source: IBM Institute for Business Value. The "well curver" concept was described in the following article: Pink, Daniel H. "The Shape of Things to Come," *Wired*. May 2003.

high points. The middle is a tar pit. Examples of the shrinking middle abound:

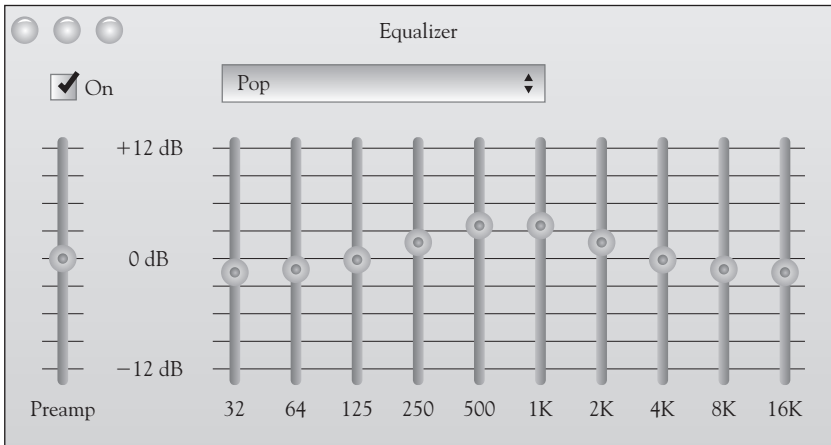
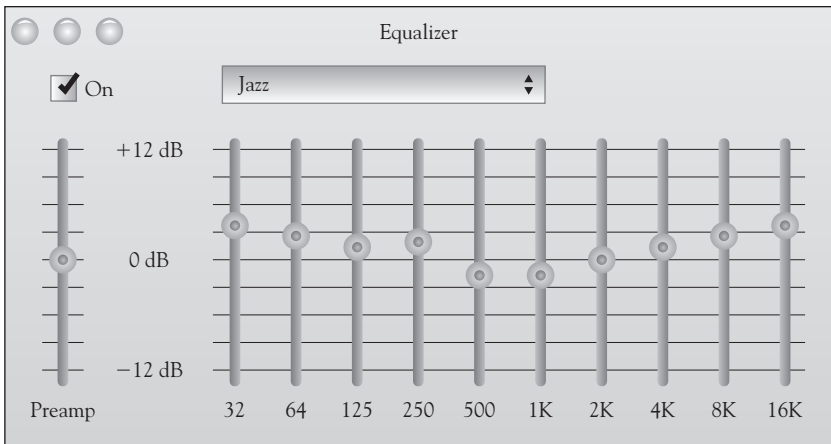
- The rise in sales of either very big TVs (60-inch plasma) or very small ones (incorporated into cell phones), and the severe decline in the sale of midsize ones (such as the old 27-inch TV)
- The release of more automobiles of the extremely small and big varieties, and the decline in popularity of midsize vehicles
- The growth of organizations through mergers and acquisitions, or their shrinkage through spinoffs
- The rise in huge multinational federations (NAFTA, the European Union, and so on), with the simultaneous multiplication of independent states and secessionist movements
- Increasing or shrinking portions at restaurants
- The rise in the number of students scoring in the highest and lowest ranges on standardized tests, and the drop in the number of students scoring in the middle ranges

- The increase in the number of people earning at the top and the bottom of the income scale, and the decrease in the number of people earning a middle-class income
- The increase in the number of consumers flocking either toward high-end products or toward cheap products while fleeing products in the middle ground
- The rising popularity of extreme sports—and of golf
- Increasing polarization of politics toward the left and the right, with movement away from the center
- The proliferation of megaretailers as well as of niche boutiques

The middle may still be where most people are, but it is no longer the place where most people desire to be or plan to stay. Words like *average*, *medium*, and *middle* have fallen in popularity. And whereas companies used to gravitate to the word *general*, they no longer do. The slogan for today's culture is "Wherever you end up, don't end up in the middle."

As a basketball official, I can tell you that the worst place from which to see the play is the middle of the floor, right under the basket. You are much better off at one side or the other, in order to get a wide-angle view of the court. In fact, officials are taught to imagine the area below the basket as quicksand. You don't want to find yourself there, and if you do, you want to get out of there as quickly as possible and go wide.

Even popular music has shifted away from the comfortable middle to a more dynamic range. When I was young, I was coached in how to set the equalizer on my stereo. My equalizer had sliders from low to high frequency. For best effect, I was encouraged to create a bell-shaped curve with these sliders, with lower settings of highs and lows and a greater midrange. This would not tune to the modern ear, however. Old-school pop has given way to modern jazz stylings, with a lower midrange, higher highs, and lower lows (see Figures 1.3 and 1.4).

Figure 1.3 Pop Settings for a Stereo's Equalizer**Figure 1.4 Jazz Settings for a Stereo's Equalizer**

Where is the worst place to be assigned a seat on an airplane? The dreaded middle seat. What is the worst kind of drink you can be served? The room-temperature, lukewarm, “spew you out of my mouth” kind. It is much better to be either inside or outside, hot or cold.

Today the middles are in trouble, and the edges seem vital. According to Sweet, who explores this model in the realm of a chain of coffeehouses, one of the keys to the success of Starbucks is the company's gravitation toward giving the consumer an extreme experience—extreme comfort, extreme tastiness, extreme hotness.² Maxwell House, by contrast, is stuck in the middle. The days of the happy medium (and of a related word, *mediocre*) are gone.

How does the well curve apply to the church? Relationships are one of the areas where I don't think you can go partway and be successful. If you are going to make your ministry about relationships, then really make your ministry about relationships. Don't go halfway. You can't "kind of" make community a priority. You have to go full-on.

And how does the model of the disappearing middle apply to the church? Here are three of the many ways, according to Hall:

- *Membership*. Some congregations are raising the bar and giving membership greater emphasis; others are dropping membership.
- *Money*. There are fewer "average" givers.
- *Manpower*. There is a shrinking role for moderately involved volunteers.³

But I think the greatest application of this model to the church is in overall positioning. The medium-size church of a few hundred people, once prized, now doesn't seem attractive. It is neither big enough for impact nor small enough for intimacy.

And yet the brighter the light, the darker the shadows. I was talking with a friend who is a leader in a traditional denominational church. He was telling me about a worship director his church was about to hire. Evidently she is very gifted and qualified. A very proficient pianist. A very powerful vocalist. Sounded pretty good on the surface. Maybe too good, actually. The number of times my friend used the word *very* to describe her raised a red flag for me. I said to him, "Challenges often attend the word

very.” To be specific, a few years ago I hired a young lady to be a worship director. She was an extremely gifted violinist. In fact, she was so good that she is now living in Nashville, working with some of the biggest names in the music industry. She brought tremendous value onstage, but to make her compensation make sense, I also had her doing some things for me in the office (setting up small groups, answering phones, and so on). She was a way better performer than a clerk. If we could have opened up her skull, we would have found that the right side of her brain (the creative side) was musclebound and that the left side (the analytical side) was shrumpy. Corresponding to the overdeveloped part was an underdeveloped part. I call this phenomenon of the shadows that attend extremes the *bright-light quandary*. Taking the example of talent, you can see that as the light gets brighter, the shadows become more intense. What to do about the shadows? Do not turn down the light. Instead, turn on the backlight. Counterbalance with the opposite extreme. You do have to cover the blind spots, and they tend to be more dramatic the more you have to use the word *very* to describe the strength.

It's a Hybrid World

Hybrid is a hot word in our mash-up culture. Hybrid forms provide us with elements of two desired outcomes. A hybrid is an attempt to get the best of both worlds. Hybrid vehicles, for example, give us economy with performance.

There are hybrid dogs, toaster ovens, and schools. Hybrid forms result when two elements of different entities are mixed for a particular purpose. They bring together the best of two worlds. Here are some examples of hybrid forms:

In mythology, a creature combining body parts of two or more species

In biology, the offspring resulting from cross-breeding of different plants or animals

In etymology, a word with mixed origins

In the world of bicycles, a model combining the design features of a road bike and a mountain bike

In automotive transportation, a car that combines an internal combustion engine with an electric motor

In finance, an economic vehicle that combines elements of debt and equity

In golf, a type of club that combines elements of a driver and an iron

In video games, human avatars with alien characteristics

In the world of churches, a congregation that achieves the best of both intimacy and impact

In our hybrid world, the extremes are becoming more extreme, but the poles of the emerging well curve are also being bridged in various ways.

For example, both quality and convenience are having their day in transportation. Harley-Davidson can ship four hundred thousand motorcycles per year. Confederate Motorcycle, based in New Orleans, builds high-performance \$62,000 bikes but sells fewer than one hundred per year. Confederate is not trying to compete with Harley for market share. Confederate is focused on breakthrough performance and design innovations, and that's all.

You can also see combinations of higher convenience and higher quality in some business models that have come forward in the music industry. There is a place for both kinds of value. Musicians are allowing their music to be downloaded at low quality and cost (in some cases letting the consumer name the price) and at the same time they are providing high-quality concerts and CDs with extra content. In response to extremes in convenience, you are also seeing extraordinary value-added packaging. From the same artist you can now download a twelve-second ringtone of a popular song or order a four-DVD set with live concert and studio footage.

Bounty, the manufacturer of paper towels, has found that people are actually polarized over which value proposition—smallness or bigness—they favor overall. Bounty researched the reaction of people to a smaller size of paper towel (six inches by eleven inches) and found that one in four people will select a smaller towel when given the option. The company also found that many people did not want a smaller sheet at all, ever, and that they preferred the full-size square towel. Bounty's solution? The company created a paper towel from which the consumer can tear off one, two, or three sections, according to his or her needs and tastes. Do people want a smaller or a bigger towel? Yes. At different times? Yes. In different combinations? Yes.

Speaking of technology and packaging, one day I was browsing YouTube videos on my phone and caught myself avoiding the longer video clips. I did not want to have to put up with the buffering times for clips of a minute or more, and so I began to gravitate to clips that were sixty seconds or less. When I realized what I was doing, an idea came to my mind—the sixty-second sermon. The idea is pretty simple, really—a video that would include a reading of scripture, an explanation, an illustration, and a summary. In the middle of the workday, maybe at a stop light or during a work break, a person could watch a brief sermon and have a moment of inspiration. Who says that spiritual content has to be delivered in thirty to thirty-five minutes? And yet I have sensed a growing desire for deeper Bible teaching that cannot be accommodated on a typical Sunday morning, and so I am strategizing about providing several hours of biblical and theological instruction on a weeknight.

There is demand for both. For example, as things now come at us in miniature, Johnson sees a “snacklash” in our culture, with people wanting not just want bite-size content but also the full-meal deal:

If we're truly living in a snack culture, how come so many forms of entertainment—TV shows, games, movies—are getting

longer? Most of us, I suspect, have had this experience lately: You tell a friend that they simply have to start watching one of the new long-format dramas, like *Heroes* or *The Wire*. There's no question of picking it up midseason. They've got to go back and start at the very beginning—using iTunes or BitTorrent or Netflix to catch up—or they'll be utterly confused. Invariably, your sales pitch also comes with the disclaimer that they'll have to watch four or five episodes before they really get hooked. Some of the most complex shows—like *Deadwood* or *Lost*—take multiple episodes just to introduce all the main characters.

Think about that: At roughly 45 minutes an episode, that means viewers will readily invest two to three hours in a show just to get oriented. The story itself can stretch on for dozens of hours. (*The Sopranos*, for instance, should top out at nearly 75 hours when it ends this spring.) Television has always had serial narratives, but aside from soap operas, each episode was traditionally designed to stand on its own. A midseason hour of *Kojak* made perfect sense in isolation. But you'd need *Cliffs Notes* to follow a midseason installment of *24* cold.⁴

In today's culture, there is interplay across the spectrum. Just as customers want both low cost and high quality, both the personal and the professional, both the informal and the formal, both freedom and structure, both caring and competing, those of us in the church want the intimacy of smallness and the impact of bigness, if we can have both. Intimacy and impact seem to pull away from each other, like the two poles of a magnet. But they are both desirable in the church. How do we achieve a balance between the church as a close-knit family and the church as a world-changing army? We can achieve that balance in one of two ways; by heading toward the middle or by counterbalancing on the edges, just as you can balance a teeter-totter by coming to the middle and straddling the fulcrum, or by having equivalent weight applied to each end of the board. Of the two approaches, I prefer balancing by

extremes, that is, becoming extreme in both respects, intimacy and impact.

In fact, extremes in two directions are actually characteristic of Christianity. As Chesterton notes, “We want not an amalgam or compromise, but both things at the top of their energy; love and wrath both burning.”⁵ In the area of worship, for example, if the extremes are “rockin’ out” at one end of the teeter-totter and old-time hymns at the other, then it might be better for us to use an extreme version of each style in a single service—really rockin’ out, and really singing hymns—than to try to put the two styles in a blender and come out with something that doesn’t give us the taste of either. I know from experience that “blended” worship is not very tasty. You have to go to extremes.

In the digital world, we now have delivery mechanisms for more of everything (shorter and longer, smaller and bigger, low-fi and high-fi, and so on). While brief, grainy YouTube clips circulate virally online, the average length of a major motion picture has expanded from ninety minutes to over two hours. Consumers have gotten used to making choices that alternate between high fidelity and low convenience, and between low fidelity and high convenience. For instance, there are various ways in which a person can watch a movie, and there are trade-offs involved with each (see Table 1.1).

Given options across this spectrum, consumers are saying, “Yes, yes, and yes.” You can watch a sitcom or a “bitcom.” You can read a self-published e-book online or buy a novel in print

Table 1.1 Fidelity and Convenience

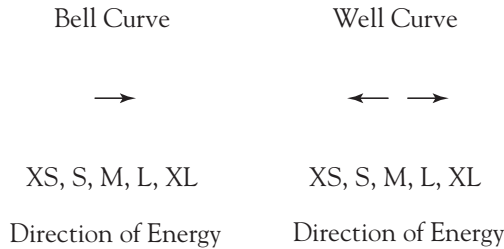
	<i>Theatre</i>	<i>Home Theatre</i>	<i>Mobile</i>
Fidelity	***	***	**
	Wide screens	Big-screen TV	Tiny screen
Convenience	**	***	***
	Travel, cost	Ability to pause	In pocket

at a forty-thousand-square-foot Barnes and Noble bookstore. Movies, television shows, songs, and games come packaged like cookies or chips or in large combo packs. Sporting events get encapsulated in highlight clips on ESPN but are also available on demand via satellite. Young people consume 140-word tweets while devouring six-hundred-page tomes like *Twilight* and the books in the *Harry Potter* series. There are still blockbusters in film, literature, and music, but now, because of online retailers, we are not beholden to “the man.”

There is a growing appetite for cell cinema—short-subject films designed to be viewed on a palm-size screen. For example, director Frank Chindamo’s Fun Little Movies studio provides original content for Sprint cell phone customers. Slowly he is luring big-screen stars like Sharon Stone to the super-small screen. Hooray for Cellywood! “Blogs reduced the newspaper to the post. In TV, it’ll go from the network to the show,” says Jeff Jarvis, founder of *Entertainment Weekly*.⁶ As viewing habits become more atomized, people no longer watch entire shows, just the parts they care about.

The evolution from mainframe computers to the networked PC was one of the most significant cultural changes to happen in our lifetime. It forecast the shift from the centralized, top-down way of doing business to the interconnected, bottom-up way. The small can act big. The big can act small. The growth in possibilities has followed the arc of architectural innovations that shrank the size of hard disk drives from fourteen-inches in diameter to eight inches, five and one-quarter inches, three and one-half inches, two and one-half inches, and now one and one-eighth inch.

Through each epoch of globalization, extremes have become empowered. But the old bell curve values greater size and performance. The new well curve presses the extreme in both directions—the bigger is getting bigger, and the smaller is getting smaller. The energy is now going in two directions, not just one. The left side of the graph, not just the right side, has been increasingly empowered.

Figure 1.5 Direction of Energy

As Thomas Friedman says, the world has become smaller as it has become bigger: “In Globalization 1.0, which began around 1492, the world went from size large to size medium. In Globalization 2.0, the era that introduced us to multinational companies, it went from size medium to size small. And then around 2000 came Globalization 3.0, in which the world went from being small to tiny.”⁷ Meanwhile, as the world has become smaller, in the past decade large companies have grown even larger, particularly those in a position to support the newfound power of individuals to collaborate. The modern world has gone from big to small. Next step: both. We are becoming an hourglass society, where we must learn to kiss and punch at the same time.

Sweet describes emerging combinations:

One example of how to bring the ends together in a well-curve world, and the benefits of a simultaneous engagement of both ends of the continuum, is the competing food habits of indulgence and wellness. “Contradictory consumers” are going in opposite directions at the same time. We go from Ben & Jerry’s Ice Cream or Krispy Kreme Donuts to the organic salad bar or raw juice bar.

We live in a Godiva culture of indulgence layered upon indulgence lathered with a whipped-cream topping of guilty pleasures and a final red cherry of repentance. This is also a culture obsessed with weight and health consciousness. We have the highest obesity rates in the world, and eating disorders run

rampant. How do you bring these “dueling extremes” of death-by-chocolates and squeaky-clean foods together?

The blended, cut-to-the-middle solution of the bell-curve world was to introduce low-cal, low-fat chocolate. That didn’t work. Why eat chocolate if you can’t enjoy the fat-drenched flavor of decadence? People want the experience of luxurious chocolate. They don’t want halfway, diluted experiences of chocolate. But they also want a responsible weight-management program, one that can make a difference and not just create delusions of health.

The key is to offer consumers two opposite experiences at the same time. Hence portion-controlled chocolates. Nestle’s Butterfinger Stixx and Hershey’s Sticks offer the binge experience of chocolate in a way that doesn’t adversely impact the body. Hershey’s Sticks, with a tagline promising a “convenient guilt-free way to indulge in chocolate,” is available in an eleven-gram, sixty-calorie bar, with a choice of milk, dark, caramel, or mint-flavored chocolate. In a similar vein, Nabisco has introduced 100 Calorie Packs (portion-control versions of indulgent snacks such as Oreos and Cheese Nips).⁸

Part of CTK’s appeal is that you will often find us at both ends of the teeter-totter. Instead of being a church that is somewhere in between big and small, or neither big nor small, we’ve become extremely big as a network and quite small as individual groups and centers. We’ve expanded rapidly by simultaneously strengthening the core and expanding the frontier. We’ve been engaging because our services present bleeding-edge music with old-fashioned biblical teaching. We’ve reached a balance by being extremely graceful and truthful, not by being slightly both. There is a danger today of getting caught in the quicksand of the middle ground. Go to extremes.