

Hybrid Church: The Fusion of Intimacy and Impact

An Interview with author Dave Browning

Why did you write *Hybrid Church*?

Christ the King Community Church (CTK), the multi-location church that I pastor, is sometimes described as a megachurch because of its overall size, and sometimes described as a microchurch because of our commitment to small groups, and the fact that many of our worship centers are quite small. But our story doesn't fit comfortably in either camp. So for several years I have been describing CTK as a "hybrid" church. I finally got around to describing what I mean by that. We exhibit some of the compelling qualities of both the mega and microchurch.

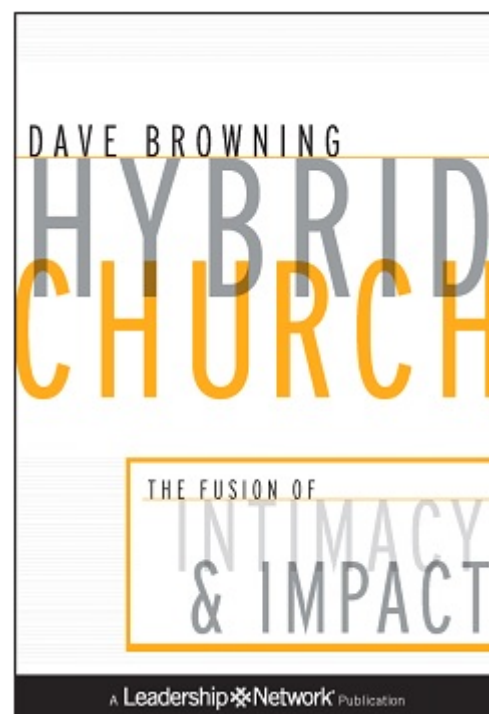
I felt that the big church/small church conversation needed an "all of the above" choice. While some have gravitated to the impact of the megachurch, and others have been drawn to the intimacy of the microchurch, I think the most powerful church forms of the future will be a fusion.

What does it mean to become a Hybrid Church?

There is a spectrum of church ministry, with intimacy on one side, and impact on the other. Most churches are drawn, almost magnetically, toward one of those poles. Churches that emphasize community, fellowship, belonging, togetherness are being pulled toward intimacy. Churches that emphasize outreach and mission are drawn toward impact. It is important, first of all, that a ministry understands where it is on the spectrum. Then it takes intentionality to stretch toward the other extreme. Often our discourse is exclusive of the other value, so we must learn a new language, and then ultimately behave in cooperative ways.

How will *Hybrid Church* help churches move along that spectrum?

By framing the conversation with the words intimacy and impact, I think *Hybrid Church* provides a helpful new vocabulary with which to discuss the relative merits of big and small ministry, and the intrinsic value of blends. An important concept is the notion of "balance by extremes." The way to get the best of both intimacy and impact is not to head toward the middle and be a little bit of both, but to go to extremes. We need ministries that are both extremely intimate and extremely impacting at the same time. This frees both the mega and microchurch to become more of what they already are.



Who is the book for and why should they read it?

The book is for leaders who are tired of one-dimensional approaches to Christianity – that it's all one way or the other. After years of either/or, it's time for the church to be heard in stereo. Hybrid Church will be meaningful for Christian leaders who want to hold two ideas at the same time: that the church can be both personal and powerful.

How does the Hybrid Church concept play out in the real world?

So much of what is popular in today's world is an amalgamation of what is big and powerful, with what is small and personal (the iPhone being a classic example). People want both intimacy and impact when they can get it. Unfortunately, they usually have to choose one or the other in the church. The tone of Hybrid Church is appreciated, as I value and esteem the relative merits of the big and the small. Instead of talking about "the way" that ministry should be done, I talk about "ways." I don't see a necessary conflict between the mega and the microchurch. I see a lot of possibility for mutual benefit.

What's one big surprise for readers to look forward to in the book?

One thing I found surprising was learning that megachurch leaders feel the need for validation by microchurch leaders just as much as microchurch leaders desire to be validated by megachurch leaders. Really, when any part of the body looks at another and says, "I don't need you," it hurts, and we all feel the pain. The way to begin melding the mega and micro is by starting small, sitting down for coffee and building relationships with leaders who are across the spectrum from us. Before we can work together, we have to learn to appreciate what the other is bringing to the table.

What do you hope readers take away from the book?

A humility that comes from seeing God's work in the world as bigger and broader than any of us. A desire to see people experience both the intimacy and impact of the church. A readiness to risk a journey in the direction that is not your comfort zone.

What's a practical first step leaders can take to become both?

Call up a local pastor or leader who does ministry differently than you and invite him/her to coffee. Ask a bunch of questions about who they are, what they are doing and why. Then validate them and their ministry. Be open to what the Holy Spirit might reveal about the church. See what kind of miracles start happening in the body of Christ.

Dave Browning is a visionary minimalist and the founder of Christ the King Community Church, International (CTK). Prior to CTK, Dave pastored in traditional and megachurch contexts. His experiences led him to become a pastorpreneur and to break many of the rules of the established church. A scion of simplicity, Dave wrote *Deliberate Simplicity - How the Church Does More by Doing Less* (Zondervan, 2009) to describe a new equation for church development, where less is more, and more is better.

Dave is married to Kristyn and has three children, Erika, Jenna and Daron. He lives in Burlington, Washington.