

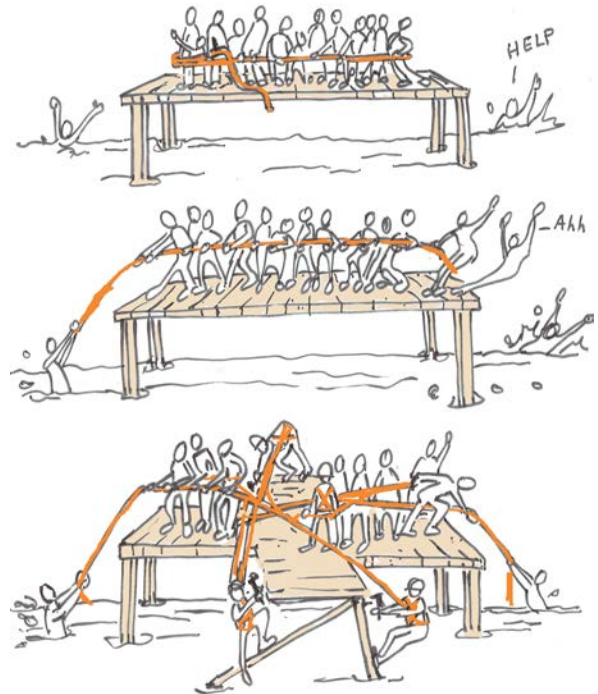
Deep? or Wide?

- Sometimes we feel a tension between going **deep** and going **wide**
 - What are some examples?
 - What are we to do?
 - There is no single right answer!
- How might this happen in the church?
- What are we to do?

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Too much of a good thing? Acts 6:1-7

Chinese: page 1773
 Spanish: page 1392
 English-Green: page 747
 English-Brown: page 1096
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Acts 6:1-7

- 1: **The problem:** growth+differences left some behind
- 2-4: • Significant growth and diversity
- 5-6:
- 7:

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Growth and Diversity of the Early Church• **Growth**

- Initial group: 120 *Acts 1:15*
- 3,000 added *Acts 2:41*
- Daily addition of people *Acts 2:42*
- Up to 5,000 people *Acts 4:4*
- “More and more men and women” *Acts 5:14*

Probably less than a year's time

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Growth and Diversity of the Early Church

- **Growth**
- **Diversity: ethnicity:** all Jewish at this point, and yet...
 - Hebrew & Aramaic speaking from Judah
 - Plus: “Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs” *Acts 2:9-11*
 - Spoke different primary languages
 - Grew up in different contexts with different histories

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Growth and Diversity of the Early Church

- **Growth**
- **Diversity: ethnicity:** all Jewish at this point, and yet...
- **Diversity: finances**
 - Some had big homes and extra properties they could sell and donate
 - Others needed daily provisions
 - Most were in between

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Growth and Diversity of the Early Church

- **Growth**
- **Diversity: ethnicity:** all Jewish at this point, and yet...
- **Diversity: finances**
- **Diversity: household structure**
 - With and without a male head of family
 - In a patriarchal society especially, a household without an adult male was at risk

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Acts 6:1-7

- 1: **The problem:** growth+differences left some behind
- 2-4: • Significant growth and diversity
- 5-6: • “Overlooked” = **unintentional + harm**
- 7: • Language & Culture
 - Those leading the food (& money) distribution were Hebrew-speaking locals
 - Greek-speaking ‘outside’ widows were getting missed
 - Language **“Hebrew advantage”**
 - Cultural patterns, practices, & appearances
 - Connections
 - Greek-speaking non-widows spoke up
 - “Complained”
 - Had a voice that widows did not have, and used it

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Acts 6:1-7

- 1: **The problem:** growth+differences left some behind
- 2-4: **The proposed solution:** add trusted, godly, able leaders
- 5-6: • Leaders invited whole community into the process
- 7: • Recognized importance of multiple priorities:
- Meeting physical needs of people in the church
 - “Wait on tables” was more than carrying dishes
 - Proclaiming the Word (Bible) & prayer

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*The Message of the Gospel was central
to the life of the church*

Jesus said, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my **witnesses** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” *Acts 1:8*

“They devoted themselves to the **apostles’ teaching** and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” *Acts 2:42*

“They [Jewish religious leaders] were greatly disturbed because the apostles were **teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus** the resurrection of the dead.” *Acts 4:2*

When threatened to stop **speaking or teaching in the name of Jesus**, Peter and John replied, “As for us, we **cannot help speaking** about what we have seen and heard.” *Acts 4:20*

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*The Message of the Gospel was central
to the life of the church*

God sent an angel to give His command to the apostles: “Go, stand in the temple courts,” he said, “and **tell the people all about this new life.**” *Acts 5:20*

“They [their opponents] called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them **not to speak in the name of Jesus**, and let them go.” *Acts 5:40*

“Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, **they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news** that Jesus is the Messiah.” *Acts 5:42*

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Acts 6:1-7

1: **The problem:** growth+differences left some behind

2-4: **The proposed solution:** add trusted, godly, able leaders

5-6: • Leaders invited whole community into process

7: • Recognized importance of multiple priorities:

- Meeting physical needs of people in the church
 - “Wait on tables” was more than carrying dishes
 - Proclaiming the Word (Bible) & prayer
- Needed additional leaders & workers
 - “From among you”: likely this is Greek speakers
 - Good reputation + in step with Holy Spirit + able
- There is no ideal church structure except some measure of flexibility

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Acts 6:1-7

- 1: **The problem:** growth+differences left some behind
- 2-4: **The proposed solution:** add trusted, godly, able leaders
- 5-6: **The implementation:** entrusted with a work of God
- 7: • Congregational decision
- They saw that the plan was good and right
 - Both Greek-speaking and Hebrew-speaking people
 - People chose the leaders by the apostles' criteria
 - All Greek names: likely not native Hebrew speakers
 - Nicolas: convert to Judaism (not born Jewish)
 - The 12 blessed and empowered these leaders
 - Entrusted with a work of God in the church

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Acts 6:1-7

- 1: **The problem:** growth+differences left some behind
- 2-4: **The proposed solution:** add trusted, godly, able leaders
- 5-6: **The implementation:** entrusted with a work of God
- 7: **The result:** rapid growth AND health
- Ministry of the Word grew
 - Process: proclaiming (inside and outside)
 - Outcome: belief & obedience
 - Failing to adjust to growth+diversity would have reduced growth and health
 - Adjustment enabled more growth and health
 - Even more diversity: priests

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The Big Idea

The challenges of growth and differences
 were turned for good
 by the approved and blessed addition
 of trusted, Spirit-filled, able, and diverse “ministers”
 in different roles
 to keep the church’s commitment to the Bible and prayer

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Application

- Be committed to the Bible and prayer
 - Preaching & Life Groups & mentoring & personally & ...
 - Who dares to speak for God?
 - Who would stand here and dare to do otherwise??
 - Paragraph-by-paragraph
 - Commitment to this test: “Where stands it written?”
 - Is our vision driven by the Word or by us?
 - Are the sermons & applications driven by the Word or by the preacher or teacher?
 - Commitment to pray together and individually
 - We need to grow...
 - Other important matters threaten to pull us away

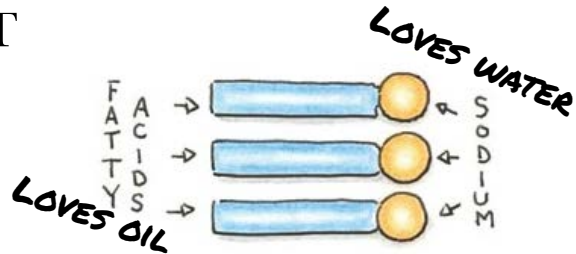
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Application

- Be committed to the Bible and prayer
- Focus on both IN **and** OUT

- Soap

- Each molecule “loves”
oil **and** water



- “Love” both IN **and** OUT, rather than competing

- Church fails in its mission if it stops doing either passionately

- Requires constant adjustment and innovation

- Acts illustrates constant adjustment of church governance to pursue both parts of the mission

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Primarily INWARD focus

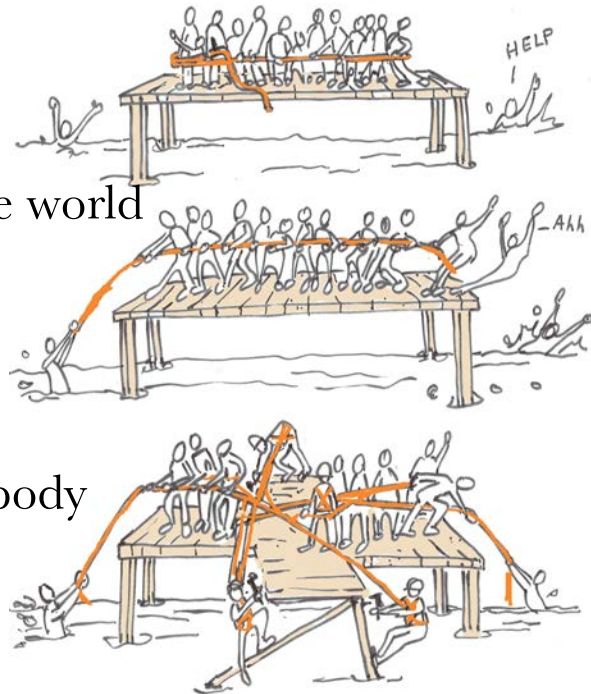
- Fail to be God’s witnesses to the world

Primarily OUTWARD focus

- Fail to be the body of Christ

God’s design

- Loving new people INTO the body
- Loving people who are already in the body



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Application

- Be committed to the Bible and prayer
- Focus on both IN **and** OUT
- Be a church that is effective across differences
 - **for all:** widows of all languages got the needed help
 - **of all** and **by all:** people who *knew* and *were known by* the widows led and implemented the help
 - We want all of our ministries to be increasingly **for, of, and by all** of the people they help
 - Usually this includes visible diversity of leadership

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Application

- Be committed to the Bible and prayer
- Focus on both IN **and** OUT
- Be a church that is effective across differences
- Approve and bless more “ministers”:
leaders and workers
 - Trusted by all (know, and are known by)
 - Especially by the ones they are to serve
 - Spirit-filled: walking with Jesus
 - Have (growing) ability for the task

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The Big Idea

The challenges of growth and differences
were turned for good
by the approved and blessed addition
of trusted, Spirit-filled, able, and diverse “ministers”
in different roles
to keep the church’s commitment to the Bible and prayer

- **Paying attention to culture & power is essential for a church with differences among its people**
- **Because it supports growth and health through the Word and prayer**

