

Q & A



You Were Never Meant to Lead Alone *The Power of Sharing Leadership*

September 23, 2025 | \$20.99, 224 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-1208-6

“In an age and culture where poor leadership in the church has left liminal space in its wake, E. K. Strawser, seeking the best path forward, provides a clear and viable understanding of shared leadership culture and how to implement it. This is a must-read for church and organizational leaders.”

—**Rowland Smith**, national director of Forge America Missional Training Network and author of *Life Out Loud*

The Power of Sharing Leadership

Why did you decide to write this particular book on shared leadership?

E. K. “Eun” Strawser: While there have been many attempts at describing what shared leadership is and through what lens shared leadership can operate in the church, the strongest being APEST or 5-fold gifting (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers), there is a scarcity in implementing shared leadership in a way that practically decentralizes the pulpit in order for the church to be connected to the community, depicts how it operates in praxis, and includes voices of leadership from women, BIPOC leaders, and locally rooted communities. This book will:

- Concretely define distributed/shared leadership in the church in contrast to hierarchical and often patriarchal leadership.
- Reframe APEST in ways that are both inclusive to gender, race, and culture.
- Consider the real-life power dynamics and temptations leaders must address in order to carve out real space for distributed/shared leadership.
- Practically structure distributed/shared leadership in a sustainable way that multiplies distributive leaders in the church.

Describe what shared leadership looks like.

Eun: Sharing leadership is a more communal and biblical model of missional leadership, well ahead of our current church culture’s assumption that hierarchical leadership is best. At its worst, hierarchical leadership has contributed to an epidemic of domineering and abusive leadership in the church. This book highlights marks of leadership maturity (over mere competency), utilizes APEST as a leadership tool that includes gender, race, and culture, and makes the case that in order for the church to be a reflection of the fullness of Christ, it needs to share power.

What are the five main things you want readers to take away from *You Were Never Meant to Lead Alone*?

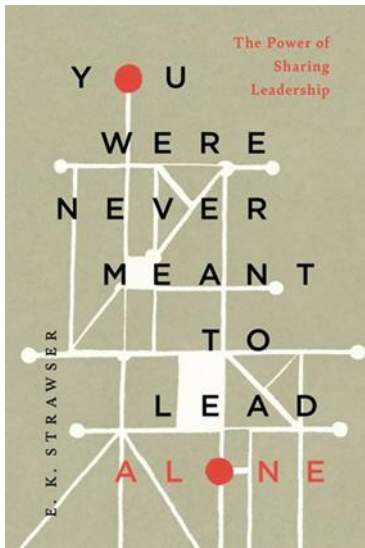
1. There’s a need to shift from hierarchical leadership to sharing leadership.
2. Sharing leadership requires mature leaders who are disciples first.
3. Sharing leadership utilizes APEST as a tool to enlarge the table of leadership that considers gender, race, and culture.
4. Sharing leadership is the antidote to domineering leadership in the church.
5. Sharing leadership is pivotal to the sustainability of churches.



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“When I read You Were Never Meant to Lead Alone, I wanted to stand up and cheer! E. K. Strawser is fearless, unflinching, and amazingly articulate in her case for a collective model of leadership that is both more faithful to the gospel and more effective for the twenty-first century context. . . . This is a necessary book for this kairos moment. May it midwife the change that the church needs for the sake of the world.”

—**Alexia Salvatierra**, academic dean of Centro Latino of Fuller Theological Seminary, from the foreword

There are a lot of books for leaders. How is this one distinct?

Eun: With the continual headliner of domineering leadership and failure of leadership in the church, most work involving a different kind of leadership as an antidote to this culture has often been focused solely on the health or soul care of the main leader. There is a stark need to offer a more practical antidote in addressing a different approach to leadership apart from hierarchical leadership. While many have read through books theorizing shared leadership, including works on APEST and even church leadership based on personality types (e.g. enneagram), there is a need for 1.) a real-life model where distributed leadership is embedded into the structure of the church and its impact on the community it serves, and 2.) APEST explained through the lens of gender, race, and culture that includes both women and men, BIPOC leaders, and the local community.



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BIO



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E. K. Strawser seeks to recover the shared leadership model of the early church, offering a practical and inclusive alternative to hierarchical and patriarchal church leadership structures. This book invites pastors, church planters, and ministry leaders to rethink how leadership can empower the entire body of Christ. By identifying the gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers, this book provides a vision for leadership that fosters collaboration, inclusivity, and spiritual flourishing.

Rev. Dr. Eun K. Strawser, Author of *Centering Discipleship* and *You Were Never Meant to Lead Alone*

“Believing in and practicing shared leadership in a power-hungry world (and, too often, a power-hungry church) is a prophetic act that proclaims a different kingdom and holds out hope in a final joy that is far better. E. K. Strawser not only teaches wonderfully and skillfully coaches us in this area of discipleship, so sorely needed in the church today, but she lives it and embodies it. Every church leadership that longs to be conformed to the way of Christ will find this book to be a healing balm and insightful guide.”

—**Kyobem Lee**, professor of practical theology and doctor of ministry program director at Missio Seminary

Eun K. Strawser is the covocational lead pastor of Ma Ke Alo o (which means “Presence” in Hawaiian), nondenominational missional communities multiplying in Honolulu, Hawaii, a community physician at Ke Ola Pono, and an executive board member of the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) with twenty years in both local and trans-local church-planting work at executive levels.

Prior to transitioning to Hawaii, she served as adjunct professor of medicine at the Philadelphia College of Medicine and of African Studies at her alma mater the University of Pennsylvania (where she and her husband served with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship) after finishing her Fulbright Scholarship at the University of Dar es Salaam. She is the author of *Centering Discipleship: A Pathway for Multiplying Spectators into Mature Disciples* (IVP). She and Steve have three, seriously, amazing children.

Rev. Dr. Strawser has nearly two decades of experience in centering discipleship and making mature missional disciples. She has developed lay counseling curriculum, discipleship pathways for children’s ministries, and discipleship pathways utilized both in established church and church-planting contexts. While her heart is in locally-rooted kingdom work, she also consults and coaches pastors, planters, and marketplace/community leaders worldwide in developing discipleship pathways and structuring their context to center discipleship.

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