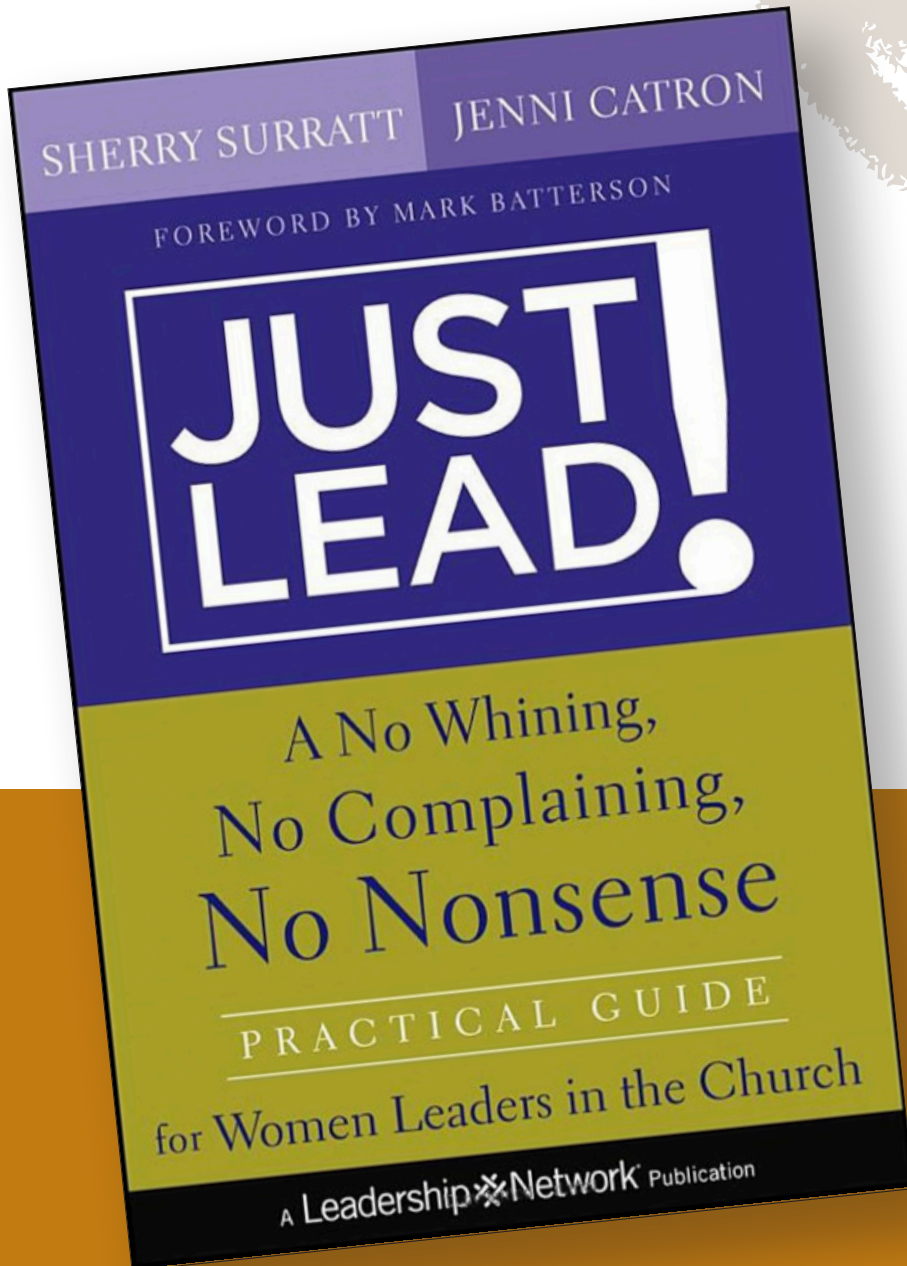


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## Just Lead | *Sherry Surratt and Jenni Catron*

Just Lead! A No Whining, No Complaining, No Nonsense Practical Guide for Women Leaders in the Church  
 Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA, 2013. 172 pages.

*Just Lead* is a welcome guide for women who feel called to lead but need help to learn what it takes to break the “stained-glass ceiling.” Sherry Surratt, CEO of MOPS International, and Jenni Catron, executive director of Cross Point Church, are two experienced leaders who have served in a number of capacities in churches and organizations.

In *Just Lead*, Surratt and Catron explore the barriers – both internal and external – that keep women from assuming a leadership role. They also provide practical reality checks on what women can do to become effective leaders.

### Only the Lonely

Oftentimes, women leaders feel that now that they lead teams, they don’t belong on one. Perhaps it’s a vague sense of isolation because their role has changed and removed them from the familiarity of a former team. Or they are not quite comfortable in the role of leading others older and more experienced than themselves.

***Making assumptions that gender and age are debilitating factors and allowing yourself to become an island will limit your performance as a leader.***

You can’t afford to buy into the lie that there’s no one out there to lean on to help you grow. Satan doesn’t want you to reach out beyond your cone of silence to ask for help. He wants you to suffer alone, hoping you’ll never use your leadership gifts or develop them.

Lean in to two kinds of people: encouragers and challengers. Encouragers always have kind affirming words for you that refresh you and keep you going. Challengers always make you think further, work harder, and push you to grow into all that you can be.

Ask God to send those encouragers into your life and for the courage to be vulnerable and admit when your encouragement tank is running low. Ask God to send the challengers you need and the wisdom to seek their input.

### I’m Not Afraid

For most of us, the new and the unknown has a unique ability to throw us into a tailspin. Uncertainty is like a free pass for imagination to run amok. There are three directions your fear will lead you: in, out, or up.

#### **Going in**

The most common direction for you is to go inward, internalizing the fear. When you go inward with your fear, you shut down and lose access to rational thought. Going inward with your fear is your first natural reaction, and it’s the most destructive.

#### **Going out**

Going out is projecting your fear outward. Your fear makes you feel trapped like a caged animal and stirs up defensiveness and the inclination to lash out. Sometimes you need to take a few minutes (or hours) to bring your thoughts and emotions back down to a reasonable level.

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### *Going up, the best direction*

Neither of the previous paths is the one God wants for you. The Bible tells us that God wants to know us; in fact, in some versions, it uses the word “desperate.” He craves for you to bring your thoughts, joys, and fears to him so he can know every part of you. God wants us to come to him – actually run to him with our fear, even when we are ashamed of them.

*It’s tempting to focus on what you can control to build your own sense of security.*

Here are some practical ways to make sure you are going up with your fears:

- Bring it into the light – instead of keeping your fear secret where it will look bigger than it actually is, name it, bring it out into the open, and talk to a trusted advisor about it.
- Form a prayer SWAT team – seek out trusted friends to count on to bathe the situation in prayer.
- Attack the worry monster – worry feeds fear, so instead of letting the worries and fears snowball, how about launching a counterattack with Scripture and prayer.
- Get help with a few reminders – give a trusted friend permission to call you out when he or she sees you succumbing to fear and worry.

### **The Monster You Are Avoiding**

Am I enough? Can I measure up? Do I have what it takes? Do I even belong here? The questions may change, but they all point to one lurking monster: insecurity.

How is it that we can know in our heart of hearts that we have to play for an audience of only one, but then feel so crummy in the light of others’ accomplishments?

Be grateful for the critiques and opinions of others, sifting through and learning from them and not letting them feed you insecurity.

You make decisions wisely from the abundance of God’s presence in our life. You lead in confidence even under attack from others because you know God’s love for you never ends. This can be you, and in fact, it is you, with the constant daily soaking in of God’s promises and truths found in his Word.

The power of repetition becomes a reality when it becomes part of your daily routine to the point that these truths become part of who you are: a safe, secure leader called by God to lead.

### **You’re Not Doing It Right**

Our responses to critics tend to take one of two forms:

1. We ignore critics altogether and harden ourselves against their remarks, without gleaning anything that could be helpful or important for us to learn.
2. We absorb every criticism and agonize over it.

*Criticism is personal, or at least we make it personal.*

Individuals tend to perceive criticism when it concerns the things that they are also the most vulnerable about.

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- Shame – when we're wrestling with issues of belonging, we're going to have difficulty leading effectively.
- Rejection – fear of rejection is painful because it's criticism of who we are, of something that is unique or distinct about us.
- Failure – Fear of failure boils down to criticism of what we do.

We're familiar with the destruction that criticism can cause, but if it is filtered in a healthy way, it can be constructive and move us along our journey to become more God-honoring in our leadership. So how do you discern the difference?

- Filter it through prayer – whatever criticism you are facing, make it a matter of prayer first.
- Seek wise counsel – rely on wise counselors who can be a safe sounding board for filtering criticism.
- Welcome healthy pruning – sometimes pruning (aka criticism) may be just what we need to gain some perspective and see how we are influencing the world around us.

***The most important thing you can do to overcome criticism is to remain focused on your calling.***

### Growing Pains

Pride creeps into life in the most surprising ways. Here are some lies that pride tells you:

- You need to be needed – pride quickly distorts our natural longing for community into an entitled need for recognition.
- You're too good for that – pride tells us that the feeling that some work is beneath us.

Understanding where it grips us and takes hold of our lives is critical to moving forward in humility and wisdom.

***Humility leads us to grace, truth, and wisdom.***

Lifelong learning is one of the greatest keys to leadership. Wisdom begins when the posture of our heart is such that we're humbly learning and growing and seeking God's truth in every circumstance. Some of the ways to keep your heart attuned to learning include:

- Read voraciously – determine what you enjoy reading and why, and schedule it into your week.
- Seek mentors – mentors come in a variety of different forms:
  - Peer mentors – an individual who is in a similar stage of life as you and is passionate about growing in the same ways.
  - Spiritual mentor – a voice of wisdom and counsel who will challenge you spiritually.
  - The mentor you will never meet – mentors who write the books that speak to you.
  - Specialized mentor – people in your life whom you have the opportunity to learn from if you are watching carefully.

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- Make every moment a learning opportunity – learning begins long before you arrive in your ideal leadership environment.
- Consider continued formal education – consider getting your next degree or taking some classes in an area of interest.
- Attend conferences and other learning environments – exposing yourself to a new environment is a great way to expand your perspective.

### Make Up Your Mind Already

Most leaders have faced a decision that feels just a bit bigger than you're qualified to handle. Congratulations – that's a sign that you're leading well.

### ***Good decision-making is an overflow of a heart that is in tune with God.***

The starting point for your confidence in decision-making has to come from believing that you are where God has called you to be.

As a leader, more specifically a steward of the people and resources God has entrusted you to lead, you need discernment to make the decisions you face daily.

### ***Trying to make a large decision too soon can paralyze your decision-making.***

God doesn't give us the entire route all at one time. He gives us next steps, step-by-step, day-by-day. Learning to be comfortable and confident in those steps of obedience is what marks you as a great leader.

Indecision taps into some of the issues we perpetually wrestle with:

- Control – decision-making can be terrifying because if we get it wrong, we lose control.
- Impatience – waiting on God for clarity, direction, or permission to move can often cause anxious hearts.
- Listening – sometimes we're unable to make decisions because we're not willing to stop and listen.
- Avoidance – sometimes it's not as much that we can't decide, but that we don't want to decide, to make an unpopular decision.
- Fatigue – dangerous, erratic behavior can result from simply being too tired to decide.

Solutions for indecision:

- Accept responsibility – if everyone else knew what to do, they wouldn't need you to lead them – it's your responsibility to make decisions.
- Follow a formula – a few simple steps can help you start making progress in decision-making:
  1. Identify the problem or issue.
  2. Investigate it. Study it. Understand it.
  3. Seek input from those most closely associated with it.
  4. Pray seriously.
  5. Make the decision expeditiously.
- Trust God

## Just Lead | *Sherry Surratt and Jenni Catron (cont'd)*

### Go Big or Go Home

Nehemiah was a man who saw the problem and didn't shrink back from going after it with all he had. Here are some lessons from Nehemiah:

- Nehemiah didn't step ahead of God – don't step ahead of God and what he needs to work in you first.
- Nehemiah quietly did his homework – The Bible tells us he gathered his resources and supplies and went through the proper channels for approval.
- Nehemiah didn't try to be a lone ranger – You can't do it alone, and you shouldn't even try. But enlisting help doesn't mean hiding the commitment and sacrifice that will be required.
- Nehemiah refused to quit – When faced with problems, Nehemiah led his team straight to God and instead of giving up, they stepped up their efforts.

### Leading Men

Men and women speak and receive information differently, and as leaders we must be sensitive to this.

There are appropriate times when emotions may overcome you, but it's not okay to shut down a discussion or disagreement with an outburst of tears because your feelings are hurt or you're not getting your way. Emotion is going to threaten to overwhelm all of us, men and women, from time to time. The important thing as a leader is how you choose to handle it.

### ***Good leadership is not leading by authority or position, but by inspiration and empowerment.***

All leaders need to feel respected, honored, and trusted, and these affirmations are especially needed when it comes to women leading men. Here are some affirmations that a wise leader will pay attention to when working with men:

- They need our respect
- They need to feel honored
- They need to see our trust

The reality is that men and women can work together in harmony in a way that honors God and his unique creation of male and female. It takes work and a commitment to maturity and stellar leadership, with encouragements like:

- Go the extra mile
- Be a grownup
- Grace, grace, grace
- Stop the blame game

## Just Lead | *Sherry Surratt and Jenni Catron (cont'd)*

### Overcoming the Communication Barrier

John Maxwell has stated that, “everything rises and falls on leadership.” If that is so, leadership rises or falls on communication. Here are some layers of communication effectiveness that will set you up to just lead even better:

- To understand and to be understood
- Be a good listener
- Be self-aware
- Be sensitive
- Be direct and confident
- Pay attention to your timing
- Just be you

### Put the Boxing Gloves Down

It is commonly recognized that competition exists between men, but how about women? The hardest part about attacks from other women is that you often don't see them coming. You are minding your own leadership business and then wham! You find yourself the butt of gossip criticism, blatant defiance, or the cold shoulder. Do you recognize these women leaders?

- *Shrinking Violet* withdraws her leadership out of hurt or fear.
- *Retaliating Rita* is fueled by a “how dare you” attitude.
- *Cynical Cindy* wraps herself in the hurt and rejection and lets it take root in her heart.

If you find yourself mirrored in one or more of these three types of women, take a moment to ask God to transform you through the renewing of your mind as in Romans 12:2.

Examine your actions and motivations, and implement the following practical steps to move to unity:

- Stop the judging
- Look for other women to champion
- Affirm other women to anyone who will listen

## Just Lead | *Sherry Surratt and Jenni Catron (cont'd)*

### Engaging the Next Generation of Leaders

Churches are continually asking, “How can we find more leaders?” and many young women are asking, “How can I lead?” Why the disconnect? When it comes to including the younger generation in key leadership decisions there is a double whammy: a sense of fear and perceived loss of control on the part of older leaders, plus a lack of comfort with this different generation.

If you don't have young men and women involved in your organization's leadership and you're looking for them, here are some things to think about:

- Place your trust in people, not experience – are you willing to trust younger leaders even though they can't always prove trustworthiness up front?
- Pay attention to how you speak – the older generation speaks “business” but the younger generation speaks “social.”
- Use your shoulders – help the younger generation lead by allowing them to stand on the shoulders of your experience so they can see further than you ever could.
- Operate in reverse – older leaders should consider aligning themselves with younger leaders not to mentor, but to be mentored.

Be the best leader you can be, even if your leadership opportunity is small. Don't whine, don't get defensive, and don't pout.

### ***Just lead.***

Seize every opportunity to grow in your leadership. Continue to encourage the women around you, and be their champion.

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## Just Lead | *Sherry Surratt and Jenni Catron (cont'd)*

### Recommended Resources

1. **Read** what Auxano Founder and Team Leader Will Mancini has written about removing the invisible walls on your church leadership team.
2. **Read** *Just Lead* author Jenni Catron's thoughts on the importance of leadership and vision casting to yourself.
3. **Read** *Just Lead* author Sherry Surratt's thoughts on the three splendid truths of leadership.
4. **Watch** a brief series of 1-minute videos as authors Jenni Catron and Sherry Surratt talk about the big ideas of *Just Lead*.

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## Go Ahead Actions for Vision Clarity

by Mike Gammill

### Vision Clarity Connection

Whether you're already an accomplished leader, or you believe God is calling you to break through the stained glass ceiling, it's time to Just Lead! Don't make the mistake, however, of thinking that Surratt and Catron's guide is exclusively for women. Not only can it help men understand how to better support women who lead, its unique tone and practical advice can just as well help their leadership.

### Go Ahead

#### 1. Don't go it alone—cultivate professional peer relationships.

The opportunity cost is too great to go it alone, so overcome the isolation and loneliness that often accompanies leadership with intentional and appropriate relationships with peers. Whether it's through denominational ties or connections made at a conference, develop a rhythm of reaching out to those who understand the challenges of your leadership role. Breadth in relationships has its value, but deep investment in a few key relationships can yield significant gains; 2-3 peers can help you move a mountain. Prioritize and commit to at least one hour a month connecting with a professional peer.

#### 2. Lead the genders well.

Surratt and Catron suggest you deal proactively with gender-based conflict. As you lead you are responsible to help others make their best contribution to the mission.

- Identify women who work around you to champion and affirm to everyone who will listen.
- Take the risk of investing in a woman who hasn't had a chance to prove herself.
- Play it smart for God's Kingdom by duplicating yourself in at least one other woman this year.
- Trust the men who follow you to follow well when you lead with inspiration and empowerment.
- Remember that men respond best when they are respected and trusted.

#### 3. Create a strong decision-making process.

Often, the health of your team rises or falls on the quality of your decisions. The only thing more important to your team than making the right decision is making it in *the right way*. If they can see that you are attuned to God, listen to those who are executing the plan, and learning from every decision you make, your team will trust you even if they don't agree. So, create a process for making decisions that can land the plane in 5 minutes or 2 hours (depending on the complexity of the situation)—and stick to it whenever possible.



## More About Mike Gammill

Mike has fifteen years of experience serving in the local church in multiple capacities. He started in ministry as an Associate Pastor in a small rural church in Montana and served most recently as an Executive Pastor of Discipleship in a 5000-member church in Northwest Houston. From his experience as a lone associate pastor and an interim Senior Pastor in smaller churches to his experience on a staff of over thirty, Mike has a passion for uncovering potential in the Body of Christ through Christ-like leadership. He specializes in leading collaborative discussions and designing missionally aligned strategies and organizational structures.

Mike has a Master's of Divinity from Asbury Theological Seminary and is an Ordained Elder in the Evangelical Church of North America.

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