

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

Raising Unexpected Leaders

*Recognising and Releasing the Leaders
God Has Already Placed Among Us*

By
Kevin Kirkland

Copyright © 2026 by Kevin Kirkland

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the author.

Recommendations for Hidden in Plain Sight

"Hidden in Plain Sight is a timely and necessary book. Kevin writes with the credibility of someone who has lived every page of it — leading in business and pastoring in the local church — and the result is a compelling, biblically grounded case for recognising the ministers God has already placed among us. When Kevin asks, "What if one of the great corrections needed in the Church today is not theological, but imaginative?", he puts his finger on something the Church urgently needs to hear: we do not lack leaders, we lack the eyes to see them. This book will be of enormous benefit to the many who are giving themselves to serve God in commerce, industry, and countless employment sectors, as well as in church life and public ministry. It deserves to be read widely by pastors, movement leaders, and everyone discerning what faithful leadership looks like in this generation."

**Stuart Blount, Director of Ministry, Elim's National
Leadership Team**

"The better question is not, "How many people are in the church?" but, "How many churches are in these people?" As God draws many to faith, Kevin challenges us to rethink how we sustain and multiply this movement. With biblical conviction and practical wisdom, he offers a compelling vision for equipping and releasing co-vocational leaders to advance the mission of the Church."

Dom Bird, Senior Pastor, National Leader ACUK

‘This honest and heartfelt book kick-starts a conversation that churches cannot afford to ignore. Challenging the present perception of leadership, the author offers a vision of the future into which he dares us to venture’.

Chris Spicer, author, preacher, teacher and storyteller.

“What a timely book this is that Kevin has written, as we see God moving across our nation in ways like many of us have never seen before. We are experiencing something of a move of the Spirit, and we must do all we can to manage the miracle that is here. This means that leadership going forward will need to look different to how many of us have seen it in the past.

In the pages that are before you, you will see how the author speaks not only from his own personal experience but from a Biblical perspective that will challenge many of us to see things differently from what we have in the past.

Personally, as Lead Pastor of Rugby and Daventry Elim Church, I am forever in debt for the way in which Kevin has fully embraced both the marketplace and ministry. Kevin is a source of inspiration to many but not least to me, and I am sure as you read the pages that are before you, you too will be inspired to serve God wherever He has placed and positioned you.”

Jonathan Skelton, Lead Pastor, Rugby & Daventry Elim Church

“Kevin has named something many of us have lived but rarely had language for. As a fellow Co-vocational leader (Serving as Lead Pastor of a Church we planted while working full time) I recognise every tension and every conviction in these pages. This is a faithful, grounded, and important call for the Church to see the gifted leaders

and servants already in its midst. Those shaped and proven in the workplace, to release them fully into the Kingdom purposes God has been preparing them for all along. Every Senior Pastor, movement leader, and emerging minister with a heart to multiply leadership and to grow and plant Churches should read this book.”

**Jamie Daniels, Lead Pastor, County Durham Christian Life
Centre**

“Hidden in Plain Sight builds a strong case for re-evaluating our inherited leadership models. So often, we accept the status quo and utilise the prevailing systems, only questioning their suitability when a crisis comes. There is a prophetic wisdom in Kevin Kirkland’s thesis, both in discerning the new wine that God is pouring out and in describing the new wineskin of co-vocational leadership required in order to increase the Church’s capacity to steward what God seeks to do. Kevin has lived every word of this book before it ever hit the page. What he offers here is not merely a set of good ideas or helpful anecdotes but a potent, strategic invitation to prepare the Church of Christ for renewal.”

Joe Davis, Pastor, Rugby & Daventry Elim Church

“I’ve known Kevin all my life, and I can honestly say that everything in this book flows out of his deep love and passion for God, his family, and the church. I’ve witnessed him live this book out.

This book oozes 30 years of experience and wisdom as both a company director and church leader, and has so much to offer the local church. I love his innovation, his ability to see things differently, and his willingness to question the status quo. He has a genuine heart to see the church grow, to raise up leaders above running events, and to work smarter, not harder.

If we can take the God-given wisdom shared in this book and apply it, we'll only see more of God's Kingdom expand through the local church."

Peter Clarke, Disciple of Jesus

Table of Contents

Foreword.....	10
Foreword.....	4
Introduction.....	6
Part One The Call.....	14
Chapter 1 My Story: Called, But Not Conventional.....	15
Chapter 2 The Elephant In The Room: The Wave Is Coming	31
Chapter 3 Marketplace Or Ministry? Is It Really Either/Or?	51
Part Two The Formation.....	73
Chapter 4 From Breakdown To Breakthrough.....	74
Chapter 5 Leading Differently	93
Chapter 6 Count The Cost	115
Part Three The Response	128
Chapter 7 Take It To The Altar	129
Chapter 8 So, Is It Either/Or, Or Can It Be Both/And	135
About The Author.....	145

Foreword

Mark Pugh

General Superintendent, Elim Pentecostal Churches

It is a privilege to commend this book to you.

I have known Kevin Kirkland for a number of years now, and in that time I have watched him serve faithfully in both the marketplace and the Church. What strikes me most about this book is that it does not come from theory or organisational strategy alone. It comes from a life--from years of wrestling with calling, navigating the demands of leadership, learning discernment the hard way, and seeking, again and again, to respond obediently to God. When you read these pages, you will sense immediately that Kevin is not standing outside this conversation. He is living it.

At its heart, this book asks a question that many believers have carried quietly for years, often without words to express it: Must following God's call mean choosing between ministry and the marketplace--or might the answer, for some of us, be both?

Kevin explores this question with honesty, humility, and hard-won conviction. He invites us to examine assumptions we may have inherited without ever really testing them. And he does so not to unsettle us, but to help us see more clearly.

The timing of this conversation feels significant.

We are living through days of both challenge and extraordinary opportunity. Church leaders everywhere are grappling with questions of sustainability, discipleship, church planting, and mission. At the

same time, there is a growing recognition that God has placed wonderful gifts, wisdom, and leadership capacity among His people--often in places we have not thought to look. The question is not whether these men and women exist. The question is whether we are ready to recognise them, equip them, and release them.

Kevin's conviction--and I share it--is that many of the leaders the Church needs are already among us. They are serving faithfully in professional settings. They carry a genuine sense of God's call upon their lives. They are waiting to be seen.

One of the great strengths of this book is its refusal to draw unnecessary lines between the sacred and the secular. Drawing on Scripture, personal experience, and thoughtful reflection, Kevin reminds us that God has always called and used people across a rich variety of contexts. Joseph in government. Daniel in public service. Deborah in leadership. Paul at the tentmaker's bench. Jesus Himself, who spent most of His earthly life in ordinary work before stepping into public ministry.

Kevin is not arguing that full-time ministry is outdated or unimportant. Far from it. He is simply inviting us to enlarge our imagination; to recognise afresh the many ways God forms and deploys His servants.

What I particularly appreciate is the honesty of Kevin's approach. He does not romanticise co-vocational leadership. He does not offer it as a tidy solution to every challenge facing the Church. Throughout these pages, he speaks candidly about capacity, family, pressure, sacrifice, the risk of burnout, and the absolute necessity of wise discernment. This is not a book that celebrates doing more. It is a book that calls us to deeper faithfulness.

As I read, I found myself confronted by a question even more searching than the one in the title: Are we listening carefully enough to

recognise what God is doing among us? Are we willing to let Him raise leaders in ways that may not fit our inherited expectations? And do we have the courage--both to release and to respond--when He does?

Whether you are a pastor, elder, church planter, ministry trainee, marketplace professional, denominational leader, volunteer, or someone simply seeking clarity about your own calling, I believe you will find much here to encourage you, challenge you, and provoke reflection. You may not agree with every conclusion Kevin reaches. But I suspect few readers will finish this book without reconsidering how God might weave together ordinary faithfulness, professional experience, and spiritual calling for His purposes.

Ultimately, this is not merely a book about co-vocational leadership. It is a book about calling, obedience, surrender, and the remarkable ways God prepares His people for what He has in store. It is a reminder that nothing is wasted in the hands of God--and that some of the leaders we most need may already be hidden in plain sight.

My prayer is that as you read, the Holy Spirit will enlarge your vision, deepen your trust, and help you discern afresh the shape of faithfulness for your own season of life and ministry.

Mark Pugh

General Superintendent, Elim Pentecostal Churches

FOREWORD

By Bishop Glenn Isaguirre

I have to admit that I first heard Pastor Kevin Kirkland passionately teach the principles behind his book during one of the elective sessions for ministers and leaders at the Elim Global Asia Pacific Conference.

Pastor Kevin's talk immediately resonated with me because I have seen, in our own church, capable people who love God, lead well, but somehow never seem to fit the traditional picture of ministry. Over the years, I have watched gifted men and women faithfully serve in our church while also building successful careers in business, education, healthcare, engineering, and many other professions. They love Jesus. They love His Church. They have the heart of a shepherd. Yet many quietly carry the feeling that they must choose between serving God and remaining where God has already placed them.

As I listened to Pastor Kevin speak, I could almost see the "lightbulbs" come on around the room. It was as though a weight had been lifted. People suddenly realised that what they had sensed in their hearts for years wasn't wrong after all. They didn't have to leave the marketplace to be fully used by God.

For me, the premise of Pastor Kevin's message isn't simply about finding more church planters or introducing another ministry model. It's about seeing people differently.

First, it's about good stewardship. Every church has men and women who already know how to lead, care for people, solve problems, and carry responsibility. Many of them have quietly been shepherding people in their workplaces for years. Instead of always

looking outside for leaders, perhaps we first need to recognise the ones God has already entrusted to us.

Second, it's about recognising that the marketplace is one of God's greatest mission fields. A business owner, teacher, doctor, engineer, executive, or public servant has access to people and places that I, as a pastor, may never reach. God has placed them there for a reason. Their profession is not a distraction from ministry—it is one of the places where their ministry finds expression.

Third, it's about something very simple: recognition. Sometimes people don't need a new calling—they simply need the Church to recognise the calling God has already placed on their lives. They don't need permission to love God more; they need the Church to affirm that God can use them powerfully without requiring them to abandon the place where He has already planted them.

Pastor Kevin is not inventing a new category of ministry. Rather, he is helping the Church recover something that has always been true: God calls people, not job descriptions. Some are paid by the church; others are paid by a school, a hospital, a corporation, or their own business. Their source of income does not determine whether they are called by God.

Perhaps the shepherds we have been praying for are already in our midst. They are faithfully serving God in both the church and the marketplace, quietly waiting for the Church to recognise what God has been doing in their lives all along.

Bishop Glenn T. Isaguirre

The Living Epistle Church, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

For much of my life, I assumed that if God's call ever became clearer, it would eventually require a clean break. One day, surely, I would have to leave the world of work behind in order to give myself fully to ministry. That was the framework I had inherited, and for a long time it seemed both logical and spiritual. The workplace was where you earned a living; ministry was where you truly obeyed. For some, that is absolutely the path God gives, and I want to say from the outset that this book is not written against that. I have deep respect for those who have given themselves wholly to full-time ministry with faithfulness, sacrifice, and love. But over time, I began to wonder whether the choice is always as straightforward as we have made it sound.

Is it really a question of either/or, or can it be both/and?

And yet, over many years, I have become increasingly convinced that the way we position this conversation is often limited. I believe there are many people in our churches who love God deeply, carry a genuine sense of spiritual responsibility, and yet remain rooted in the workplace, in professional life, in family life, and in the ordinary rhythms of the world around them. Some are elders. Some are pastors. Some are volunteers. Some are quietly carrying more spiritual weight than anyone has yet named. Some are professionals who sense the stirrings of God upon their lives, but assume that because they have not stepped into conventional ministry, their calling must somehow be secondary, delayed, or less real. Others are senior church leaders, pastors, and ministry teams trying to work out how we release enough

*“Is it really a
question of
either/or, or can it
be both/and?”*

leaders for the days ahead without simply defaulting to the models we have inherited.

This book grows out of that tension.

It grows out of my own journey as a professional and also a Minister in Training, but it is not only about my journey. It grows out of years of living with a question that became harder and harder to ignore: what if the choice is not always either/or? What if, for some, the call of God is not to abandon the marketplace in order to enter ministry, but to hold both together in a way that is faithful, surrendered, and fruitful? What if the Church needs a broader imagination for how calling is recognised, how leadership is formed, and how ministry is released?

That is the burden behind these pages.

At its heart, this book argues that co-vocational leadership is not a compromise, and certainly not a second-class expression of ministry. It can be a deeply biblical, spiritually serious, and strategically necessary way of serving the purposes of

“At its heart, this book argues that co-vocational leadership is not a compromise.”

God in this generation. I am using the phrase *co-vocational* quite intentionally. By that I mean more than simply having two jobs or balancing church responsibilities alongside paid employment. I mean a life in which a person understands their work in the world and their ministry in the Church not as competing demands, but as two expressions of one integrated calling under the lordship of Christ.

That distinction matters.

Bi-vocational ministry often describes a practical arrangement. A person is partly supported by the church and partly supported through other work. It is a valid and faithful model, and one that has served many people well. But co-vocational leadership points to something

deeper than employment structure. It reflects a theology of calling. It asks whether God may deliberately form and use a person in both spheres, not simply because one helps fund the other, but because both matter to Him. The workplace may not merely be the place that pays the bills while ministry happens elsewhere. It may also be a place of witness, formation, leadership, discipleship, and Kingdom service in its own right.

That conviction has become increasingly significant to me over recent years.

For more than three decades, I have worked in the construction industry, serving as a chartered civil engineer and, in time, as a senior executive director. Alongside that, I have served in church leadership for many years, particularly through eldership and local ministry as a pastor. For much of my life, I assumed that if the call of God on my life ever became more defined, it would eventually require me to leave one world behind in order to step fully into the other. For a long time, that seemed to be the clearest and most obedient path. But as I have prayed, trained, reflected, and wrestled with God, I have come to wonder whether the issue is not always departure, but discernment. Not whether one world must always be abandoned, but whether both might, in some cases, be surrendered and used together.

This book, then, is written from inside that wrestle.

It is written for those who are sensing a call to ministry while still rooted in professional life. It is written for pastors and senior leaders who are asking how the Church can equip and release more leaders in a season of growing need. It is written for ministers in training, elders, ministry teams, and denominational leaders who are trying to think wisely about the future shape of leadership. It is written for volunteers and lay leaders who may not yet have language for what God is stirring in them, but who know they are carrying something more than they can easily explain. And it is written for churches that recognise the

challenge before us: if we are serious about mission, discipleship, church planting, and long-term sustainability, then we must ask whether our current leadership imagination is broad enough for what God may want to do.

I should also say clearly what this book is not trying to do.

It is not arguing that everyone should become co-vocational. It is not suggesting that full-time ministry is outdated or unnecessary. It is not a cost-cutting strategy dressed up in theological language. And it is not an attempt to celebrate overwork, as though carrying multiple worlds at once is somehow automatically more noble or more faithful. In fact, one of the themes that emerges strongly through this book is that co-vocational leadership must never be romanticised. It carries its own

*“If someone is not
called to it, they
should not pursue it.”*

costs, its own pressures, and its own need for discernment, boundaries, humility, and grace. If someone is not called to it, they should not pursue it. If they do not currently have the capacity for it, they should not force it. This is not about doing more for the sake of it. It is about discerning what faithfulness looks like in the season God has actually given us.

That is why this conversation matters now.

Across many churches, there is a growing awareness that the demands of ministry are increasing while the traditional pathways into leadership are becoming harder to sustain at scale. Financial pressures are real. Leadership shortages are real. The need for healthy, mature, presence-led, mission-minded, and Kingdom-focused people is real. At the same time, sitting within our congregations are men and women of deep faith, genuine competence, tested character, and significant leadership experience. Some are already leading in business, education, healthcare, public service, construction, the voluntary sector, and a wide range of other contexts. Many know how to carry responsibility,

develop people, make difficult decisions, live under pressure, and remain faithful over the long term. The question is not simply whether these people exist. The question is whether the Church is prepared to recognise, equip, and release them.

I believe this matters not only practically, but biblically.

Scripture does not present a narrow view of calling. Again and again, God meets people in fields, workshops, places of labour, centres of power, and the ordinary responsibilities of life. He forms Joseph in governance, Moses in the wilderness, David in the fields, Daniel in public service, Deborah in leadership, and Paul at a tentmaker's bench. Even our Lord Jesus spent the majority of His earthly life in ordinary labour before entering the more visible years of public ministry. The divide we often create between the sacred and the secular is not nearly as rigid in Scripture as it has become in our imagination. If Christ is Lord of all, then He is Lord not only of gathered church life, but of boardrooms, classrooms, building sites, homes, offices, hospitals, shop floors, and every other place where His people are called to live faithfully.

That means no experience is ever wasted.

One of the deepest convictions I carry, and one that runs throughout this book, is that God wastes nothing. The years spent in professional life, the pressures carried in leadership, the lessons learned through failure, the capacities developed in hidden places, the relational wisdom formed through family life, the resilience forged through disappointment, and even the seasons that felt slow, delayed, or confusing—none of these are beyond His ability to redeem and use. For many of us, the issue may not be that God has not been preparing us. It may be that we have lacked the categories to recognise what He has been doing.

At the same time, the Church must be careful here. Not every capable person is called to lead spiritually. Professional success does not automatically equate to ministry readiness.

*“Not every
capable person is
called to lead
spiritually.”*

Marketplace gifting is not the same thing as spiritual formation. This is why co-vocational leadership must never be treated as a merely pragmatic strategy. It must remain a spiritual question. It must be tested in prayer, weighed in Scripture, discerned in community, and surrendered at the altar. Calling is still calling. Obedience is still obedience. The issue is not whether we can find more efficient ways to fill gaps. It is whether we are listening carefully enough to recognise how God may be raising up leaders in this generation.

My hope is that this book will help widen that conversation.

I hope it encourages those who have quietly felt disqualified because their life does not fit a conventional ministry mould. I hope it strengthens pastors and church leaders who are trying to think courageously and creatively about how to release others. I hope it gives language to those who have long sensed that their work and their witness belong together. I hope it helps elders and volunteers see that leadership is not confined to titles, payrolls, or platforms. And I hope it invites the wider Church to ask again what faithfulness looks like in this moment.

The chapters that follow move through that journey from several angles. I begin with my own story because this burden did not begin as theory for me; it emerged from lived experience, calling, delay, preparation, and personal wrestling. From there, I widen the lens to consider the challenge facing the Church more broadly and why this conversation may be increasingly urgent. I then turn to Scripture, because if this vision is to carry any real weight, it must rest not merely on preference or pragmatism, but on biblical foundation. After that,

the book explores the realities of capacity, leadership, cost, and discernment because co-vocational ministry can only be sustained if it is carried honestly and wisely. Finally, the later chapters move towards invitation, surrender, and response.

In one sense, then, this is a book about leadership. In another, it is a book about calling. In another still, it is a book about posture, how we hold before God the lives, gifts, responsibilities, and opportunities He has placed in our hands.

Perhaps that is where I would most want to begin.

Whatever your role, whatever your title, whatever your current season, the first question is not whether you fit neatly into an existing structure. The first question is whether you are listening to God. What has He entrusted to you? What has He formed in you? What burdens keep returning? What opportunities sit before you now? What might He be asking you to place before Him afresh? For some, the answer may indeed be a more traditional full-time ministry path. For others, it may be a season of quieter preparation. For others still, it may be the discovery that the life God has given you in the workplace and the life He is calling you to in ministry do not need to be pulled apart as sharply as you once assumed.

If that is you, then I hope this book helps you think, pray, and discern with greater clarity.

My prayer is not that this book would push anyone into a model they are not called to. It is that it would help remove some unnecessary obstacles from our thinking. It is that it would encourage the Church to broaden its imagination without losing its biblical centre. It is that it would help hidden leaders recognise that God may already be at work in their ordinary faithfulness. And it is that, by the grace of God, we might become more willing to recognise, release, and support those

whose calling does not fit our inherited assumptions, but may nevertheless be vital for the future health and mission of the Church.

We are all called to serve Christ with our whole lives. The question is not whether that calling is real. The question is what shape obedience is meant to take.

And perhaps, for more people than we have yet realised, the answer may not be either/or.

Perhaps, in this season, it may be both/and.