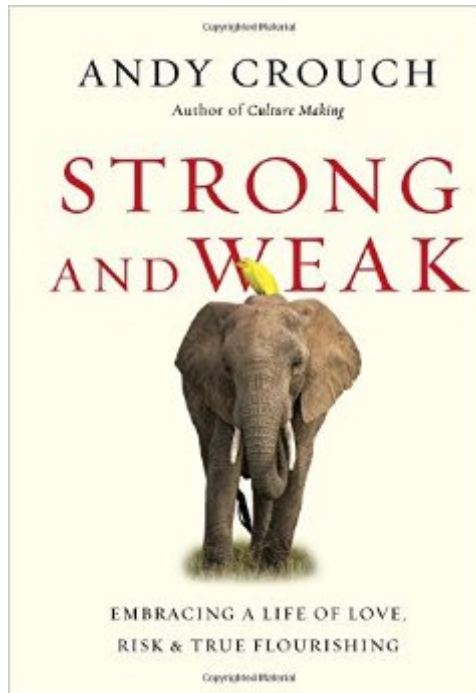


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# Strong And Weak: Embracing A Life Of Love, Risk And True Flourishing



## Synopsis

Flourishing people are strong and weak. Two common temptations lure us away from abundant living— withdrawing into safety or grasping for power. True flourishing, says Andy Crouch, travels down an unexpected path— being both strong and weak. We see this unlikely mixture in the best leaders— people who use their authority for the benefit of others, while also showing extraordinary willingness to face and embrace suffering. We see it in Jesus, who wielded tremendous power yet also exposed himself to hunger, ridicule, torture and death. Rather than being opposites, strength and weakness are actually meant to be combined in every human life and community. Only when they come together do we find the flourishing for which we were made. With the characteristic insight, memorable stories and hopeful realism he is known for, Andy Crouch shows us how to walk this path so that the image of God can shine through us. Not just for our own good, but for the sake of others. If you want to become the kind of person whose influence leads to healthy communities, someone with the strength to be compassionate and generous, this is the book for you. Regardless of your stage or role in life, whether or not you have a position of leadership, here is a way to love and risk so that we all, even the most vulnerable, can flourish.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 192 pages

Publisher: IVP Books (March 11, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0830844430

ISBN-13: 978-0830844432

Product Dimensions: 5 x 0.8 x 7 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (41 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #36,913 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #39 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Churches & Church Leadership > Church Leadership](#) #276 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Living > Self Help](#) #767 in [Books > Self-Help > Motivational](#)

## Customer Reviews

“Two questions haunt every human life and every human community,” writes Andy Crouch.

“The first: What are we meant to be? The second: Why are we so far from what we’re meant to be?” *Strong and Weak* offers an answer to that question which focuses on “the paradox of flourishing,” the necessity of pursuing “greater authority and greater vulnerability at the same

time. • Crouch defines authority as “the capacity for meaningful action” and vulnerability as “exposure to meaningful risk.” Most people “including many Christians” view authority and vulnerability in either/or terms. To the degree that we exercise authority, we insulate ourselves from meaningful risk. To the degree that we experience vulnerability, we lack capacity to take meaningful action. Given the choice between being a millionaire and a homeless person, who in their right mind would choose the latter? This choice is a false one, however. Without vulnerability, authority becomes exploitative. Indeed, Crouch argues that “the real root of the problem,” the answer to the question of why we are so far from what we’re meant to be, is “the quest for authority without vulnerability.” Without authority, on the other hand, the capacity for meaningful action, vulnerability reduces simply to suffering. The real choice we face is whether to withdraw from lives of meaningful action and risk or to embrace them both. Authority and vulnerability together lead to flourishing, “the life that really is life” (1 Timothy 6:19). “No human being ever embodied flourishing more than Jesus of Nazareth,” Crouch writes. “And precisely for this reason, no other life brings the paradox of flourishing so clear into focus.” Christ “humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death” even death on a cross.

I have read and appreciated both of Andy Crouch’s recent books. *Culture Making* made the case for why we as Christians need to be creative and speak into culture. *Playing God* made the case for the real existence of relational power and how it should be properly used. *Strong and Weak* seems like a natural follow up to *Playing God*. Once you have the idea that power actually exists and that as Christians we have a responsibility to use it well, then you have to understand how to actually lead, regardless of whether that leadership is of a large organization or your own life. The basic concept of the book is simple. Crouch has a two by two grid (you can see the grid in the book preview). High authority and high vulnerability (or risk) leads to flourishing. High authority with low vulnerability leads to exploiting others. Low authority with low vulnerability leads to withdrawing from relationships (and the world). And the final of the four options is low authority and high vulnerability, which leads to suffering. A simple grid like this works well for illustration. And there is a chapter on each of these four areas. Simple illustrations are memorable and bring insight into a complex world. Some simple illustrations reduce complexity by distorting reality. But I think this, while there can be real quibbles, does point to a real truth. And in the context of a fully fleshed out book, Crouch brings enough nuance to the illustration that is really helpful. The final three chapters are about how to encourage a flourishing life and what authority and vulnerability do and do not mean. This is the second new book this year that I have read that is based around the idea of flourishing. I have read

some negative comments about the idea of flourishing.

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