

## **The Leader: The Power We Hold**

by **Frederick E Roach**

Let's take a fresh and different look at power. It's obvious all of us have power. The real issue is, what kind of power do we have? And how do we use that power?

Consider the power each of us has to affect the lives of others. We are social beings, directly influenced by our relationships.

Our influence can be positive with those whom we come in contact, or the influence can be negative. In an interpersonal transaction, we have tremendous power to determine whether we will strengthen the person we're relating to or if we will have a detrimental effect.

The German poet, playwright and novelist, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, had quite an influence on thinking during the late 18th and early 19th centuries:

"I have come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. I possess tremendous power to make life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis is escalated or de-escalated, and a person humanized or de-humanized.

"If we treat people as they are, we make them worse. If we treat people as they ought to be, we help them become what they are capable of becoming."

Let's review some examples of the power we each can wield.

## ***The Power We Hold***

### **1. To Heal . . . Or To Hurt**

At Baylor we see firsthand a healing ministry. It's sad to see in our society a willingness on the part of so many people to kill or maim. We must be careful that we don't use our personal power to bring harm to others. Rather, the healing ministry is something we can work at constantly in our lives.

### **2. To Build . . . Or To Tear Down**

We have a fantastic ability to positively build up others, especially with words. Similarly, our words can tear others down. Proverbs 15: 1 says, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." James, the brother of Jesus said: "How great a fire is set ablaze by a small fire," in describing the tongue's work.

### **3. To Honor . . . Or To Ignore**

Epicurus, in the third century B.C., said, "The honor paid to a wise man is a great good for those who honor him." It pays great dividends to appropriately honor a



person for a job well done. We have the power to ignore excellent performance, but at a great cost.

#### 4. **To Forgive . . . Or To Seek Retribution**

The author F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote: "Forgotten is forgiveness." When we fall short of what's expected of us, forgiveness may seem a blessing. Yet at times we "forget to forgive." Real forgiveness forgets, opening doors to stronger, more meaningful relationships.

#### 5. **To Embrace . . . Or To Withdraw**

A "warm embrace," whether physical or mental, represents positive use of power. To withhold ourselves, or withdraw from support from others, weakens us. We need to build ties. When the father embraced his wayward son in the biblical story of the prodigal son, his gesture restored a broken family.

#### 6. **To encourage . . . Or To Put Down**

There's tremendous power in our voice, our expression, our written word. We can use that kind of power to strengthen individuals, families, organizations, and the community. Using the power to put down others robs both parties of the joy encouragement brings.

#### 7. **To Be Selfless . . . Or To Be Selfish**

When we use our power to look excessively inward, we adopt philosophies that satisfy our personal egos and needs. To strive for selflessness, though tough to achieve, is worth our effort. The rewards are fantastic!

#### 8. **To Work With Others . . . Or To Go Our Own Way**

Ecclesiastics 5:9-10 says: "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow, but woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up." This verse strongly illustrates meaningful teamwork.

#### 9. **To Contribute . . . Or To Rob**

There are a lot of ways to make a contribution. We can use all of our mental, physical or financial resources. We also can use our time. Good use of time is wise use of personal power. We rob others when we fail to act, when we refuse to go the extra mile to help another person.

#### 10. **To See Good . . . Or Hopelessness**

We have the power to "see" good in people or in a given situation. Viewing our experiences from a positive perspective enhances the potential for success. If we appear or feel hopeless, we've used dampened or prospects for success. Things spiral downward. But optimism raises the bar for a successful future.