ON PASTORAL POWER: thoughts drawn/adapted/provoked by

PASTOR POWER Martha Ellen Stortz (Abingdon Press, 1993)

POWER operates in several different, ways

- **commodity:** *it's a zero-sum game so that within one group, there is a fixed 'amount' of power to go around. The insecure will perceive someone else's power as an infringement of their own.*

- **capacity:** *every person has the means and potential to dominate or empower, to educate or brainwash, to inspire or control.*

- **relationships:** *power circulates (?invisibly) within a group, naturally as circumstances change when different skills/ temperaments/abilities are required or relevant to those circumstances. This makes community dynamics so confusing and unsettling sometimes, especially for those who rely on authority derived from role or office.*
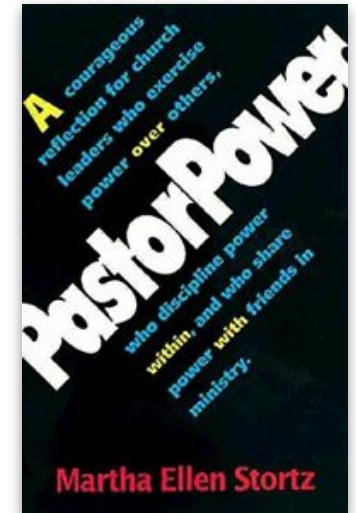
POWER must be recognised: *whatever happens, it is essential to recognise that no individual(s) can ever have power over others unless their community accepts and endorses it as such (whether formally or informally). The moment that ceases, they become powerless.*

LEADERSHIP provides the leader with:

- power to **DEFINE** *what is prioritised, significant or important to a group; conversely to dismiss what is secondary, irrelevant or taboo. Ideally the leader does this to protect the group from threats or confusions; but it can also be a means to imposing a false/self-centred narrative on the group.*

- power to **NAME** *individuals with roles or significance both within the group (and perhaps including the leader(s) themselves) and beyond (such as the hostile, the suspect, or the targeted). This can be the means to share, delegate or rotate power and responsibility, or it can centralise and exclude.*

- power to **DELINEATE SPACE** *in terms of the layout of meeting space, church services (any changes need the leader's permission) or how meetings take place (eg who sits where and who witnesses).*

AUTHORITY has features that are distinct from power

- it is **external** to the possessor

- it is **recognised** publicly

- it is often conferred by an **institution**.

	POWER OVER	POWER WITHIN	POWER WITH
Types/Forms	◆ **Sovereign** ◆ **Parental** ◆ **Bureaucratic**	◆ **charismatic** ◆ **creative** ◆ **dynamic**	◆ **Coactive power** ◆ **Friendship / Partnership**
Typical Approaches	◆ Legitimacy assumed and never unquestioned ◆ OR Dismissed as inevitably abusive, thus illegitimate ◆ OR Potentially legitimate, not intrinsically corrupt	◆ Enables those without formal roles or recognised authority to influence and shape.	◆ Gravitate towards this out of idealism and/or reacting to bad experiences.
Potential Uses/ Features	**Parenting** ◆ *to protect or abuse* **Medical** ◆ *to heal or disempower* **Pedagogical** ◆ *to educate or overwhelm* **Pastoral** ◆ *to inspire or control*	**Inspirational** ◆ *to liberate for flourishing or hypnotise for control* **7 Characteristics:** i. Minimal delegation ii. All members forced to relate directly to leader iii. Leader controls positions/roles in community iv. Minimal hierarchy v. Few or no rules/procedures vi. changes can come by sudden decree vii. temporary and unstable	**Friendship/Relationships** **7 Characteristics:** i. Friendship is always a choice ii. There is commonality (ie shared interests/ circumstances etc) iii. There is mutuality (ie shared commitment) iv. Equality in community v. Reciprocity vi. Benevolence to one another vii. Knowledge
Risks	**Sovereign** if the community removes leader's empowerment, two options to preserve power: ◆ Warrior: creating siege mentality to force cohesion around leader ◆ Tyranny: necessitates increased isolation from community **Parental** necessitates inequality - in adult relationships, there are thus three main options: ◆ Temporary inequality gets extended ◆ Goal of mutuality (if equality not poss.) ◆ Goal of visible equality **Bureaucratic** if relied upon exclusively: ◆ tends to be impersonal and robotic ◆ unnecessary for charismatic (power within)	**Inherently unstable**: since it is individual-dependent/ charisma-dependent **Potential for** ◆ poisoning relationships (eg divide and conquer) ◆ Manipulating others to act against own interest/will ◆ Leader to assume/be regarded as having indispensability **3 Checks against abuses** ◆ High degree of self-knowledge and that of others in community necessary ◆ Sense of humour and self-deprecation ◆ Generosity to/with others	◆ **Exclusiveness:** if not checked, it can breed the *Inner Ring* mentality ◆ **Amorphous:** perhaps in reaction to *Power Over*, or even *Power Within*, a reluctance to establish any structures and hierarchies. This can be workable in small group but the larger it gets the more problematic (especially if nobody looks out for those being marginalised etc). ◆ **Facilitating** ◆ but never Prophetic ◆ but never Empowering ◆ but rarely Transforming
How it functions in Community	◆ Obedient to leader ◆ Honouring the leader	◆ Inspired by leader ◆ Follow leader	◆ Responsibility shared and common involvement
As an expression of Imago Dei	◆ Power not hoarded but shared ◆ Power poured out on us (by grace) ◆ God suffers	◆ Inspired by God's Spirit ◆ Showing hospitality to the stranger (not restricted by boundaries or limits)	◆ In Christ, servants become friends/sons and coheirs/ coregents