

Power

Office Lighthouse Discussion Materials

Power

Chapter 1 - Defined

Power is “One of the central concepts of political (business) theory, which sociologists have sought to define by distinguishing it from authority on the one hand, and from force on the other. Power is the ability of its holder to exact compliance or obedience of other individuals to his will, on whatsoever basis.

The strongest man is never strong enough to always be master unless he transforms his power into right, and obedience into duty.” (The Harper Dictionary of Modern Thought)

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Power is often perceived as amoral, cunning and ruthless. How do you perceive it and why?
- 2) Some people want power and some want to arm themselves against it. What kind of person are you with regard to power?
- 3) The first law of power is “Never outshine the master. Always make those above you feel comfortably superior.” (The 48 Laws of Power, by Robert Greene) What is most important here?
- 4) “Everyone has insecurities. When you show your talents, you naturally stir up all kinds of resentment, envy, and other manifestations of insecurity. However with those above you, when it comes to power, outshining them is perhaps the worst mistake of all.” (The 48 Laws of Power, by Robert Greene) What is the real issue here?
- 5) Joseph, a Biblical character, was sold into slavery by his older brothers because he violated this principal. What do we need to know about Joseph’s mistakes?
- 6) “We can outshine those above us by being ourselves. Thus, the use of discrete flattery, acting naive, committing harmless mistakes will not hurt you in the long run, but will give you a chance to ask for help.” (The 48 Laws of Power, by Robert Greene) What is wrong or right with this idea?

Power

Chapter 2 - Deception

Robert Green, in his book, “The 48 Laws of Power”, states: “The feeling of having no power over people and events in general is unbearable; to us-when we feel helpless, we feel miserable. No one wants less power; everyone wants more. In the world today, however, it is dangerous to seem too power hungry, to be overt with your power moves. We have to seem fair and decent. So we need to be subtle-congenial yet cunning, democratic yet devious.”

To play the power game in today’s politically correct culture, everything must appear civilized, decent, democratic, and fair. But if we play by those rules too strictly, if we take them too literally, we are crushed by those around us who are not so foolish. Niccolo Machiavelli wrote, “Any man who tries to be good all the time is bound to come to ruin among the great number who are not good.”

Discussion Questions:

Power Law #3 Says:

Conceal Your Intentions

Keep people off-balance and in the dark by never revealing the purpose behind your actions. If they do not have a clue to what you are up to, they cannot prepare a defense. Guide them far enough down the wrong path, envelop them in enough smoke, and by the time they realize your intentions, it will be too late.

- 1) How do you feel about this behavior?
- 2) Where have you observed this behavior and how do you guard against it?

The 4th Law of Power Says:

Always Say Less Than Necessary

When you are trying impress people with words, the more you say, the more common you appear, and the less in control. Even if you are saying something banal, it will seem original if you make it vague, open-ended, and sphinx like. Powerful people impress and intimidate by saying less. The more you say, the more likely you are to say something foolish.

- 3) What is the real wisdom here?
- 4) How do you deal with people who talk too much or too little?
- 5) “Be as wise as a serpent and gentle as a dove.” (The Bible) What is most important in Law #4?

Power Law #6 states:

Court Attention at All Costs

Everything is judged by its appearance: what is unseen counts for nothing. Never let yourself get lost in the crowd or buried in oblivion. Stand out. Be conspicuous, at all cost. Make

yourself a magnet of attention by appearing larger, more colorful, and more mysterious than the bland and timid masses.

6) What is wrong or right with this idea?

Power

Chapter 3 - People

An unknown author summarizes the fallen nature of humankind with the following statements about relationships:

People are unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered.

If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives.

If you are successful, you will win false friends and true enemies.

The kindness you show today will be forgotten tomorrow.

Honesty and frankness will make you vulnerable.

The biggest person with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest person with the smallest mind.

What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight.

People really need help, but they may attack you if you help them.

Give the world the best you've got, and you might get kicked in the teeth.

Discussion Questions:

“The 48 Laws of Power” by Robert Greene, examines how to deal with the fallen nature of people.

Power Law #2 states:

Never Put Too Much Trust In Friends, Learn How to Use Enemies

Be wary of friends – they will betray you more quickly, for they are easily aroused to envy. They also become spoiled and tyrannical. But hire a former enemy and he will be more loyal than a friend, because he has more to prove. In fact, you have more to fear from friends than from enemies. If you have no enemies, find a way to make them.

- 1) Is this a new concept to you? Have you observed it?
- 2) What is the real issue here?

Power Law #7 states:

Get Others to Do the Work for You, but Always Take the Credit

Use the wisdom, knowledge, and legwork of other people to further your own cause. Not only will such assistance save you valuable time and energy, it will give you a godlike aura of efficiency and speed. In the end your helpers will be forgotten and you will be remembered. Never do for yourself what others can do for you.

- 3) Is this concept a challenge to your moral value system?
- 4) What is wrong with this idea?

Power Law # 10 states:

Infection: Avoid the Unhappy and Unlucky

You can die from someone else's misery – emotional states are as infectious as diseases. You may feel you are helping the drowning man but you are only precipitating in your own disaster. The unfortunate sometimes draw misfortune on themselves; they will also draw it on you. Associate with the happy and fortunate instead.

- 5) “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you”, (The Bible). How can this Power Law and Biblical Law be lived out in a practical sense?
- 6) What is your experience with other people's emotional states affecting your ability to succeed?

Power

Chapter 4 - Relationships

“This is what you shall do: love the earth and sun and the animals; despise riches; give alms to everyone that asks; stand up for the stupid and crazy; devote your income and labor to others; hate tyrants, do not argue about god, have patience and indulgence toward to people, take off your hat to anything known or unknown or to any man or number of men; go freely with powerful uneducated persons and with the young and with the mothers of families; read these leaves in the open air every season of every year of your life; re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book; dismiss whatever insults your own soul, and your very flesh shall be a great poem...” (Walt Whitman)

On the other hand, Robert Green, in his book “The 48 Laws of Power” sees life as a challenge to use people for living a powerful life. Green comments on keys to power:

“The ultimate power is the power to get people to do as you wish. When you can do this without having to force people or hurt them, when they willfully grant you what you desire, then your power is untouchable.” “Do not be one of the many who mistakenly believe that the ultimate form of power is independence. Power involves a relationship between people; you will always need other as allies, pawns, or even as weak masters who serve as your front. The completely independent man would live in a cabin the woods – he would have the freedom to come and go as he pleased, but he would have no power.”

Discussion Questions:

Power Law #11 states:

LEARN TO KEEP PEOPLE DEPENDENT ON YOU

To maintain your independence you must always be needed and wanted. The more you are relied on, the more freedom you have. Make people depend on you for their happiness, and you have nothing to fear. Never teach them enough so that they can do without you.

- 1) What is more important to you freedom or power?
- 2) What does this Law look like in a family situation?

Power Law 13 #states:

WHEN ASKING FOR HELP, APPEAL TO PEOPLE'S SELF-INTEREST NEVER TO THEIR MERCY OR GRATITUDE

If you need to turn to an ally for help, do not bother to remind him of your past assistance and good deeds. He will find a way to ignore you. Instead, uncover something in your request, or in your alliance with him, that will benefit him, and emphasize it out of all proportion. He will respond enthusiastically when he sees something to be gained for himself.

- 3) What is wrong with this idea?

- 4) With respect to man's greedy nature the Bible says "All have sinned." Do you find this to be based on truth in light of this Law?

Power Law #20 states:

DO NOT COMMIT TO ANYONE

It is the fool who always rushes to take sides. Do not commit to any side or cause but yourself. By maintaining your independence, you become the master of others – playing people against one another, making them pursue you.

- 5) Can you remain neutral and not compromise the belief system you live by?
- 6) Would this Law work in marriage or significant other relationships?

Power

Chapter 5 - Behavior

It has been said that if we observe a man's behavior we can have an idea of what his values might be. We get our values from our world view. The two dominate world views in our culture are: I am in control and I determine my destiny by my actions, or my destiny is ordered by a greater power than myself and thus my actions will at times be over-ruled by the greater power.

The word ideology coined by a French philosopher denotes 'the science of ideas' which would reveal to men the source of their biases and prejudices. If we listen to a man's thoughts or observe his behavior, we can determine his values, and his world view.

Robert Green, the author of "The 48 Laws of Power", suggests that we alter our behavior to gain power over our circumstances. Much of his ideology comes from his study of the likes of Machiavelli, a philosopher, and Sun-Tzu, a general.

Discussion Questions:

Power Law #26 States:

Keep Your Hands Clean

You must seem a paragon of civility and efficiency: Your hands are never soiled by mistakes and nasty deeds. Maintain such a spotless appearance by using others as scapegoats and cat's-paws to disguise your involvement.

- 1) Have you observed this behavior in those you work with or have social relationships with?
- 2) How do you feel about blaming others for one's mistakes and nasty deeds (the blame game)?

Power Law #33 States:

Master the Art of Timing

Never seem to be in a hurry - hurrying betrays a lack of control over yourself, and over time. Always seem patient, as if you know that everything will come to you eventually. Become a detective of the right moment; sniff out the spirit of the times, the trends that will carry you to power. Learn to stand back when the time is not yet ripe, and to strike fiercely when it has reached fruition.

- 3) Consider that we live in a culture that is technologically able to move quickly. How can we behave so as to control the flow of things as this law suggests.
- 4) "We rejoice in our suffering because suffering produces patience, patience character and character hope." (The Bible) How do you relate to this suffering process of developing a behavior that has patience and character?

Power Law #39 States:

Stir Up Waters to Catch Fish

Anger and emotion are strategically counterproductive. You must always stay calm and objective. But if you can make your enemies angry while staying calm yourself, you gain a decided advantage. Put your enemies' off-balance. Find the chink in their vanity through which you can rattle them and hold the strings.

- 5) How much anger and emotion do you deal with in the business world? How do you deal with it?
- 6) Consider marriage or significance of other relationships; how is this kind of behavior viewed? What is your personal experience with your mate?

Power Chapter 6 - Strategy

A strategy may be thought of as the precise and detailed description of a method. Strategy is usually defined as the science of military operations. In today's culture we often hear of businesses developing strategic plans.

To be strategic; one must be tactical by defining the key, crucial, and vital principles. Call it a plan, design, policy, scheme, blueprint or "the game plan".

The Bible states that "without a plan the people will perish".

Dave Dewitt, in this book, "The Mature Man", says that "a male will remain a boy, no matter what his age, until he brings order into his life. A man matures by working a strategy that leads to order in his affairs."

Robert Greene in the "The 48 Laws of Power" believes that acquiring power to win the games of life requires the adaptation of strategies that work in the world.

Discussion Questions:

Power Law #32 states:

Play to People's Fantasies

The truth is often avoided because it is ugly and unpleasant. Never appeal to truth and reality unless you are prepared for the anger that comes from disenchantment. Life is so harsh and distressing that people who can manufacture romance or conjure up fantasy are like an oasis in the desert: Everyone flecks to them. There is great power in tapping into the fantasies of the masses.

- 1) Do you see examples of this strategy in our culture?
- 2) How do you feel about avoiding the harsh truth that is ugly and unpleasant?

Law #47 states:

Do Not Go Past the Mark You Aimed For; In Victory, Learn When to Stop

The moment of victory is often the moment of greatest peril; in the heat of victory, arrogance and overconfidence can push you past the goal you had aimed for, and by going too far, you make more enemies than you defeat. Do not allow success to go to your head. There is no substitute for strategy and careful planning. Set a goal, and when you reach it, stop.

- 3) Do you have personal experience with this law? What have you observed?

- 4) What about human nature makes people unwilling to stop when victory or success is achieved?

Law #48 states:

Assume Formlessness

By taking a shape, by having a visible plan, you open yourself to attack. Instead of taking a form for your enemy to grasp, keep yourself adaptable and on the move. Accept the fact that nothing is certain and no law is fixed. The best way to protect yourself is to be a fluid and formless as water; never bet on stability or lasting order. Everything changes.

- 5) In our fast paced culture, change seems to be the norm. Can one have strategy based on absolute truth in such an environment?
- 6) What is wrong with this idea?