

Anthony Weiner and 12 Signs of Power-Hungry Leaders

The Anthony Weiner debacle is a microcosm of a greater issue related to why certain people crave positions of power and influence.

In his run for mayor of New York City, Weiner seems to be blind to the incredible humiliation he is bringing upon his family, himself and the office of mayor in general. Why would someone with all this baggage think it would never surface publicly in a very public run for office? I believe these are symptoms of power-hungry people who fit a certain psychological profile that attracts an increasing amount of dysfunctional people to politics while concomitantly repelling seasoned, mature leaders.

God-ordained public service should never be about a person's desire for power but should arise out of a servant's heart to meet the needs of the people they represent. Jesus modeled this when He washed the feet of His disciples and when He said that the greatest in the kingdom of God are those who serve (John 13; Mark 10:43). Of course, we have power-hungry leaders in every sector of society—not just in politics—and this includes the church.

I believe power-hungry people are the cause of numerous problems and divisions within the marketplace and church, and we need to be honest with them and speak into them when necessary, lest they sabotage great organizations. Since their drive for power will stop at nothing to achieve their ends, more mature leaders need to counter their dangerous ambitions instead of continually feeding into them.

The following are some of the signs of power-hungry leaders. (I believe all leaders, because of our fallen nature,

have to deal with some or all of the following issues at times in our lives. But some have totally given in and live out these issues as a lifestyle of choice.)

1. They only relate to other “power” people

Power-hungry people are constantly going to social events, parties, conferences and frequently joining boards of powerful organizations that will connect them with the most influential people—irrespective of whether they truly have the time or talents for it or genuinely want to connect with these people on a human-covenantal level. They are always looking for the next person who can do something to help them climb the social ladders in their spheres of influence, which causes them to use people instead of serving people.

2. They are constantly dropping names and speaking about their accomplishments

There are certain leaders whom I have heard speak several times, and every single time they have spoken, either to me in private or in public gatherings, they have mentioned prominent academic institutions where they received their degrees or dropped the names of high-level leaders with whom they have access. After a while, it becomes obvious they are attempting to flout their power and accomplishments so they can receive accolades or respect from others instead of it being a sincere attempt to give their audience context for their life narrative.

3. They are in competition with other peer leaders

Power-hungry leaders are always jockeying for position, fighting with other leaders they deem a threat to their influence, or are attempting to marginalize others with faint words of praise or outright gossip and slander. (Immature Christian leaders usually don't engage in outright slander but tend to marginalize others subtly when in the company of those they don't know well.)

Essentially, power-hungry leaders will not rest until they become the “big dog” in the organization.

4. They are all things to all people

Power-hungry leaders often are like chameleons who adapt to the color of their environment. For example, I have met political leaders who speak as biblical Christians when they are speaking in churches, but when they are with secular humanists they speak about their anti-biblical values.

The only thing power-hungry people value is their own power. When they are with Christians, they speak religious lingo, and when they are with secularists, they speak secular lingo. I don't think even they know what they truly believe!

Unfortunately, many sincere Christians get fooled by these people's surreptitious words and believe anything they hear. After such people are elected, these Christians are shocked by what they really stand for!

5. They are driven by selfish ambition instead of by love for people

Though they may work many hours visiting their communities and churches and being among their people, their ultimate goal is to be in power, not to meet the needs of the people. This is more obvious when it comes to candidates for an elected office. But pastors and church leaders have also fallen into this syndrome and act this out in the context of their own denominations or congregations.

6. They love the praises of men

At the end of the day, power-hungry people live to hear other people sing their praises. They have such low self-esteem that they need to continually feed their egos by being the center of attention in every event, party and gathering they attend. Consequently, they are easily insulted when they deem others

not bowing down to kiss their rings and can quickly turn on these people.

7. They often compromise their ethical values

Whatever ethical values they have go out the window if they believe it will help them get into a position of power. For example, some prominent political leaders in our nation (Al Gore and Kirsten Gillibrand, to name a few) were once pro-life when it comes to abortion but turned pro-choice when they thought it would help them gain traction in their political party. Also, I know of a prominent pastor who once believed in the inspirational integrity of Scripture who jettisoned his biblical beliefs when he was made the senior pastor of a prominent historic landmark church in New York City.

What good is your position of power if you are not going to follow your convictions of right and wrong?

8. They have few boundaries to maintain personal and family health

Power-hungry people are constantly on the go and have very little time for personal reflection, renewal and emotional health. Furthermore, they often are so driven that they cheat their spouses and children out of the precious quality time they need since they are always on the phone cutting deals, solving problems and trying to accomplish the next big thing.

9. They are only loyal to themselves

Power-hungry people are narcissists who have a need to control their environment, their friends and their futures, which means that, ultimately, they are only loyal to one person: themselves. They only have people in their inner circles who flatter them and never challenge their egos. They usually don't have close friends, hobnobbing mostly with other power people, in which both people know they are merely using one another to obtain or maintain their power.

10. They head up organizations for stature rather than service

They will go from one church to another or one position to another based on which organization will give them the largest platform and most influence. It is never about God's calling but more about influence, public exposure and proximity to power.

Money is another important issue to them; however, they deem position and influence as more important than money because they believe in the long run more influence will bring in more money anyway.

11. They exaggerate their value

When I am with power-hungry people, I usually take every word they say about their influence and accomplishments with a grain of salt since their main objective is to impress me rather than give me an accurate picture of their lives. For example, I have been with leaders who told me about how large their organizations are, but I have never seen them able to draw a crowd of people anywhere near the numbers they tout. They have erected a symbolic house of straw that they tout as if it were the new Freedom Tower that stands in lower Manhattan!

12. They have a superficial inner life

Power-hungry people usually live in denial as to their real motives and, thus, usually do not allow the searing hot conviction of the Holy Spirit to operate in their souls.

Consequently, they do not have much of a prayer life, do not enter into deep worship and rarely read the Scriptures except if they need to put a sermon together or quote passages for a political speech. Furthermore, they attempt to use God for their own ends instead of dying to self and serving God for His own ends and glory. Many actually are so deceived they think God is playing this game with them and is actually

empowering them to get more and more attention and power. Little do they realize that Satan is also involved in their lives and setting them up for a huge failure or fall in the future, which can decimate their lives, families, careers and organizations!

May the Lord help us all to see the above issues we are all grappling with and may all of us be honest with ourselves and our God so we can be delivered from our unholy ambitions and lay down our crowns at the feet of Jesus!