

Is the Modern Charismatic Church Willing to Learn This Lesson?

Love and power, like oil and water, do not mix. The well-known sociologist, Willard Waller, discovered that there seems to be an inverse relationship between love and power. He noted that in interpersonal relationships, as love increases, power decreases, and as power decreases, love increases.

Waller coined the term “principle of least interest” to describe the phenomenon, revealed by his studies, that power lies in the hands of the person who cares the least about the relationship.

For example, a couple whose marriage is disintegrating goes for counseling. The counselor can immediately tell which one loves the least. It is the one sitting in the power seat and making demands. The one who truly loves has let go of power and is willing to make any sacrifice to save the marriage.

Love and power, it seems, cannot coexist, at least in this world.

God Set Aside His Power

That is why when the time came for God to demonstrate His love for humanity, He set aside His power. Paul speaks of this in Philippians 2:6-7 (NLT), where he describes how Christ emptied Himself of the power He had known with the Father and became as a powerless slave. He wrote, “Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges. He took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being.”

This is why the Messiah, who had come to reveal God’s love,

was born in a stable, and His first bed was a feeding trough for animals. This would explain why the Christ was born, not into a wealthy aristocratic family, but into a poor family who offered up two doves and a pigeon in the temple, an alternative offering allowed by Scripture for families who could not afford a lamb (Lev. 12:8; Luke 2:22-24).

This would explain why He grew up in in Nazareth, an insignificant and despised village, well away from the power centers of Jerusalem and Rome. It also explains why He showed no interest in Herod's throne, Pilate's authority or the position of high priest. He had come to demonstrate God's love, and He could not show love while at the same time seeking power.

It comes then as no surprise that Jesus directed his disciples away from visions of "power" to thoughts of "service." When, for example, James and John requested the two power seats in His kingdom, Jesus rebuked them for their preoccupation with power. Power coerces and controls outward behavior. Love woos and influences and changes hearts.

But make no mistake, this is not a namby-pamby kind of love. It is not for the weak and selfish. This love requires great strength and resilience. This is love that desires the best for the other person and is willing to sacrifice its own self-interests to see it happen. The ultimate example of this love, known in the Greek New Testament as *agape*, is found in Jesus Christ.

Love Is More Effective Than Power

A father became distressed over the rebellion of his young son, whom he had disciplined again and again. One day as he was about to apply another punishment, he was overcome with grief for his son and suddenly fell at the boy's feet, weeping profusely. The son was stunned and stood speechless, but from that moment was changed.

In the Old Testament, God demonstrated His power. He thundered from Sinai, parted seas, destroyed armies and even stopped the sun and moon in their paths. His people, however, continued to be a rebellious people, for they had not yet seen His love.

This is what Christmas and the cross are all about. It is about God setting aside His power and showing humanity the depth of His love. Jesus called on His disciples to walk in this same *agape* love. In John 13:34-35 (MEV), Jesus said,

“A new commandment I give to you; that you love (agape) one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another.”

Constantine or Christ

For the first 200 years of its existence, the church demonstrated the love of Christ and had great success spreading its influence throughout the earth. The church conquered the mighty Roman Empire without raising an army or lifting a sword.

Constantine, however, thought He knew better than Christ and He began merging the church with power. The church began using the power of the state to advance its cause, and love took its flight. Terrible atrocities were committed in the name of Christ as the medieval church gained power but lost influence.

The Reformation was a move away from power and back to the gospel of Christ. Nonetheless, many in the church today are still seeking “power.” Many today are closer to Constantine than to Christ in this regard.

At Christmas, we celebrate God setting aside His power and coming to earth and demonstrating His love for humanity. This love would reach its apex at the cross for nothing epitomized weakness like a crucified individual hanging on a Roman cross.

This is the challenge Christmas brings to the church. Are we following the example of Christ in letting go of power? Are we walking in pure love? Or are we, like Constantine, seeking to merge power with love?

In the passage mentioned above, Philippians 2:5-8 (NLT), Paul clearly states what our attitude and approach should be. He wrote,

You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges. He took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

Christ's Justice and Power Will Be on Full Display When He Comes Again

Love makes us vulnerable, and we are sometimes tempted to not walk in love because people will take advantage of us. We must remember at such times that justice is an essential component of love. God is a God of justice, and no one is going to get away with anything.

When, therefore, He comes again, His power will be on full display. This time He comes, not as a baby in a manger, but as the mighty Sovereign Lord of the universe. For those who have rejected His love, it will not be nice. John saw that day with people crying out to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev. 6:16).

Paul wrote to the believers in Thessalonica who were going through terrible persecutions and exhorted them to "See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone. But always seek to do good to one another and to all" (1 Thess. 5:15). However, he

wrote to those same Thessalonian believers,

And to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. They shall be punished with eternal destruction, isolated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

Receive His love today, and avoid the wrath that is coming.

Dr. Eddie Hyatt is an author, historian and ordained minister who has written extensively on spiritual renewal and other issues related to the Christian faith. His books are available from Amazon and his website at [http://www.eddiehyatt.com](#). To read more on the issue of power and love in the church, check out his book, *Pursuing Power: How the Historic Quest for Apostolic Authority and Control Has Divided and Damaged the Church*.