

Series: *FATHER'S DAY—June 18, 2006*

IT'S ALL ABOUT *POWER*, DUDE!
Matthew 5:5

I. INTRO

- A. Whenever the word **power** is used, people's ears perk up. We talk about power a lot. We take power naps, use power-drives, drive power-boats, make power-plays, do power-lifting, play Power Ball, use power tools. I found out that you can even **power dress** to intimidate. Guess what color works best for that!
- We are very careful to **measure** power: Kilowatts, giga-bytes, mega-hertz, decibels, amps, kph, fps, horse-power, rpms, roentgens, degrees, megatons. I have to say, most women don't give a rip about this stuff. I think it's a guy thing—you know, to measure where we are on the charts.
1. Anyone remember the power **outage** a couple of summers ago? And power is a **good** thing! It's **good** to be strong; it's **good** to have the horsepower you actually get **on** the DVP. Power helps us travel, compute, heal, lift, cool, heat, cook mow our lawn—oh, and impress our friends.
-But power, when it's in the wrong place or in the wrong hands can hurt you. Any guys here ever gotten your finger in the wrong place in an electrical circuit? Anyone here ever been on the wrong end of horsepower in an accident?
 2. People not only like power—they'll fight for it. A lot of people have died in the power-struggles in this world. Whether it's used for good purposes or not depends on us.
- B. So, today—on Father's Day, when some of you guys will probably get a 'power something'—I want to talk about power. We all know that power can be *abused*, *misused*, or *disused*. We all know someone who uses power to show off, intimidate, or get their own way. How do you use it in such a way that most people are **glad** you have it?

II. THE BIGGEST AND BADDEST OF THE BIBLE!

- A. As I thought about this power thing, I thought, "Who would be on the **Who's Who** list of power people in the Bible? The person I immediately thought of was **Samson**. Anyone ever heard of Samson? I *googled* Samson and found his name used for ropes, locomotives, luggage—all kinds of stuff. **Samson** was a real guy—and his name is synonymous with power and strength.
- Samson's birth tells you a little about his strength. His Mom was childless and asked God to give her a baby. God sent an angel to tell her that her prayer was answered—and that this baby would be special--set apart for God. There were some interesting restrictions on his life—that he was to not drink wine, cut his hair, or have any contact with dead bodies of any kind.
1. If the Bible had a superman—you know, the superhero kind--Samson would be it. From what I understand of his story, he didn't necessarily **look** like a superhero. He didn't wear spandex or anything—or have xray vision. But the Spirit of God gave him what was clearly supernatural strength.. For example—grabbing a lion that attacked him and ripping it in half; or killing 1000 armed enemy soldiers with the jawbone of ass. I've been put to sleep and berated by the jawbone of an ass, but never killed by one.

-The super-feat that impresses me most was the night when Samson woke up in an enemy city, trapped within its walls. So he simply ripped the city gates out of the walls and carried them to the top of a hill—probably a mile away. These were not like your front door. These things were made to withstand armies—and weighed tons. Pretty impressive, don't you think?

- a. Samson had power—but what did he do with it? As I see Samson, he was a little like ***The Incredible Hulk***. He seemed to only use his power when he got really angry to get himself out of tough situations. God had originally given him supernatural strength to lead his people; to free them from pagan rule. Though he served God's purposes in some ways—I get the feeling that he misused, and sometimes dis-used his power.

-Why? Well, Samson had a weakness. Can any of you take a wild guess as to what it was? Samson and...***Delilah!*** He loved women. His enemies knew it—and used this weakness against him. Samson was this guy with superhuman strength who could carry tons, stomp on men like ants, and snap the strongest rope like cooked spaghetti. But he was horrible at picking girlfriends. And when they, at the instigation of the enemy--started to wheedle and nag and whine—it was like Chinese water torture for Samson. He gave up all his secrets.

- b. A woman named Delilah, gave him his final work-over and it took him down. Over and over she nags him for the secret to his strength. And when he gives her an answer, she calls in enemy soldiers to try it out on Samson while he's sleeping. Like this doesn't happen once—this happens four times. You read the story and it's like, "Duuuh, Samson—***what were you thinking!***"

-Samson goes one secret too far. He tells Delilah that the secret to his strength is his vow to God—symbolized by uncut hair. She gives him a haircut while he's napping, calls in the soldiers, and this time Samson finds out that without God, he's just a ***man***. They tie him up, put out his eyes, and put him on public display—grinding grain like a pack animal.

- c. Samson's life ended in a spectacular but tragic show of strength. He's slated to perform for all the officials in this huge pagan temple in front of thousands. He gets between the main pillars of this massive temple that held thousands--and in an amazing final show—and takes them out. The temple collapses killing him and thousands of others. Sad end, isn't it?

2. But as you know, power isn't all about physical strength. The other ***Guinness World Book of Records*** guy I thought of was Solomon. Believe me, Solomon was one impressive guy. Mental power, financial power, military power—Solomon had it all. His Dad, David, was Israel's most famous king—so he had the home court advantage in every way!

-Solomon starts, not just by being crowned king, but by an extravagant act of worship to His God.

In a dream, God tells him how pleased He is with him and says, "Ask for anything, Solomon!" Know what Solomon asks for? Wisdom to lead the people he is king over. **Good answer!**

- a. And God honored him in astounding ways. Solomon was a wise leader, a scholar, and an organizational genius. And this guy knew how to make money. Really! His annual income was 25 tons of gold. On top of all that was Solomon's income from a lifetime of work in the import/export business.

-His fame for being such an incredible multi-faceted leader spread all over the world. And leaders from every kingdom in the world of that day sought him out to check on the rumors and figure out why he was successful. We don't do that in our culture—but they did in 1000 B.C.

- b. If there was a Guinness World Book of Records, 1000 B.C. edition, Solomon would've dominated it. From the massive, exotic meals prepared for his court, to the 150,000 foreign slaves building stuff for him, to all the stuff that he imported and the organization of his government--this guy was something else!

- c. And, as it says in **The Message: Solomon was obsessed with women**. Solomon's way of keeping peace was kind of a mixture between Hugh Hefner and the U.S. government. He accumulate weapons and women. Specifically, he made treaties with foreign nations by marrying the king's daughters. **Lots** of them. Pharaoh's daughter and about 700 others—and 300 concubines. One little kid asked his Sunday School teacher, "How come Solomon had 300 porcupines?"

-Well, all these treaties and weapons brought in an era of unprecedented peace—and wealth. His people were wealthier than they'd ever been—silver was as "common as stones"—they were well-fed, and they lived in peace. How many of you would vote for a guy like that?

- d. So, what's the problem? The guy's obscenely wealthy, incredibly smart, well-liked, admired around the world, and amazes everyone? And God seems to like him too!

-I think Solomon's power went to his head. Not right away—but little by little. And it's really strange—in the process, he defied every law God had ever given to kings about not collecting wives, about not importing horses from Egypt, about not oppressing foreigners. Solomon's wives were his spiritual weakness. Instead of seeing women as co-heirs of God's glory—Solomon collected them like baseball cards. In the process of building temples to their Gods—and then worshipping these Gods. Dumb, for such a brilliant man.

- e. See, power, if you're not careful with it--feeds your ego. We begin to think that our power is all about us. That we're actually better than others. And instead of using power to heal, to free, to glorify God—we use power to grease our own path to glory.

B. Now, what I want to say up front is this: Strength, courage, wealth, influence, adrenaline, testosterone, power—these are all **good** things. As you can see in these stories, these are always gifts from a God who gives good gifts. -But, like any gift, they can be misused, abused, or disused—**instead** of being **well**-used.

1. One of the things I think guys struggle with is how they use power when they're angry. Anger sometimes gets physically and financially—and socially powerful people in trouble. When you read about guys who are in lines of work where aggression is necessary—especially sports—you find that guys are tempted to abuse this power to intimidate others and get what they want. Power out of control is **always** destructive.

-That's where Samson failed his calling. God gave him super-strength, and he used it to get even instead of using it to help a nation that really needed a leader.

2. There's another place where guys struggle. It's in using power—physical, financial, or political—as a form of dominating others—or promoting themselves-- instead of helping. Solomon started really well, I mean, he recognized his need of God's help to lead well. God gave him these amazing gifts—and he used them well for the most part. But his power went to his head.

-What you find in Solomon is him dominating the market, using slavery to build monuments to himself, and using women to satisfy his sexual desires and achieve political ends.

Power is a gift from God to be used on other's behalf—not as a way of saying **Lookit me! Lookit me!** to intimidate or impress others.

3. Something else we have to remember about power, guys, is that a great start doesn't guarantee a checkered flag at the end of life.

-As I already mentioned, Samson and Solomon impressed **everyone**. Their names were on everyone's lips. They made the women swoon and the enemy swear. But neither one had an impressive end. Samson won a great victory—but it was a suicide mission. The one who really gets me is Solomon. God had given him **everything**. Yet he got lost in some mid-life crisis that I'm not sure he ever made it out of. People were so tired of him flexing his muscles that when his son tried it, it created a civil war.

-The best gift Solomon gave us is his journal—that after all he had accumulated with his power, it was meaningless! If your journey has been pretty much about the **big #1**, it doesn't matter how impressive the trophy room is—it's meaningless. You have to be careful what trophies you use your power to collect.

III. LESSONS ON POWER FROM ONE WHO HAD IT ALL

A. In closing, I want to talk about someone else who was way more powerful than Solomon—and also called the Son of David. Anyone know who that might be? It was Jesus. And He got the power thing right.

1. In our world—and in that world—power was measured by the clothing you wore, the food you ate—really, in every realm of life. The best analogy I can think of is what happens on a plane. The people in the front of the plane ride—**first class**. And from that point back it's called—**coach**. But everyone knows what it really is—**second class**, cause things change dramatically. The size of the seats, leg room, restroom facilities, the stuff you eat, the stuff you eat off of, the attention you get. And there's a curtain in between—just in case you forget.

-When God's Son was coming to this planet, the angels said, "You'll be traveling... **first class**, of course." But Jesus said, "No, I think I'll be traveling coach." And he did. From the splendor and power of Heaven—Creator of all—to a barn, a manger, no money—no place to lay his head.

- a. Sometimes we have this image of a pale-faced, Jesus with thin arms, soft hands and limp wrists. Jesus wasn't a wimp. For the first 30 years of his life, he was our culture's equivalent of a construction worker who carries a metal lunch box and thermos every day to work. He was very likely a stone-worker in a huge construction Roman construction project going on just miles from his home in Nazareth.

-The very fact that he had some pretty rough and tough guys—fishermen, a loan shark, and a freedom fighter following him says something about the fact that He was a man's man. In fact, one day Jesus made a whip—all by himself

Then He single-handedly drove scores of scam artists out of the temple. He probably left some welts on their "buttocks" in the process.

- b. Jesus had **amazing** power. But He knew where it came from—and He knew what it was for. So He was **very** careful in how he used power. He used it to change people's futures. He used it to heal children and servants. He used it to feed hungry people, to free people from moral and spiritual prisons they found themselves in.
2. Jesus followers didn't always get this—and sometimes **still** don't. In fact, the ones who seemed most enamored with power were his cousins—James and John. Jesus had a pet nickname for them: **Sons of Thunder!** Sounds like a great action movie, doesn't it? Ta ta ta ta ta **TAA-A! SONS OF THUNDER-R-R!** Coming soon to a theater near you!
 - a. One day when some Samaritans were giving them a hard time, they said, "Hey Jesus! Call down fire! Nuke 'em! This will give, **turn or burn** a whole new feel." Jesus basically said, "Grow up, guys."

-The best power-play, though, was when they had their Mom, Jesus' Aunt Salome, come and ask for the two highest positions—next to His—in the new kingdom. The other 10 disciples were furious. Anyone know why? Well, cause **guys like power**—and these two got to Jesus first!
 - b. It's in the context of this blatant grab for power that Jesus makes his most profound statement. It's a statement of fact. **You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them (p. 674, Matt. 20:25 NIV).**

-In our world, we call this the pecking order. In a barnyard, there is no peace until the chickens find out who is the biggest and best chicken—and who is the least. If you're the middle chicken, then you get pecked at by those above you—and you get to peck those below you.

-Researchers haven't been able to figure out why the top chicken gets that spot—but they have figured out why the top orangutan is the top banana. Know what it is? It's the orangutan with the bluest backside. Honest! They did an experiment and dyed an orangutan's backside royal blue—and sure enough, it went right to the top. When you're at the top, you get to boss the other orangutans around and you get your pick of food and girlfriends.

-What was interesting was that when the dye started to fade, the orangutan eventually made it's way back down the ladder of success in "orangutan town." He ended up neurotic.

- c. And there's a pecking order in all of the kingdoms of our world—political, corporate, high school. It can be seen in subtle ways—like who gives way when two people start talking at the same time. Like whose jokes get laughed at—even when they aren't funny. Like who's allowed to ramble and pontificate in conversations and who isn't. Who has to say, "I'm sorry"—and who doesn't.

-Jesus said, "You **know** that power people lord it over...exercise authority over—you **know** that happens." And it does. Power has a corrupting effect on people.

- d. But then Jesus says, ***Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (p. 674, Matt. 20:26-28 NIV).***

-What was Jesus saying? "I'm going to have a kingdom, but **you** have to be wimps. Doormats. Let other people run over you, slap you around, and otherwise humiliate you. Slink and whimper?"

-**Emphatic** no!!!. What Jesus was saying is, "You want power? Good! Power's a good thing! But it's not good when you bully...when power, for you, is about you getting your way and stoking your ego. Power is a gift from God—and it's good when you use it to **serve**; to **give your life away**—not to protect your ego or your stuff.

2. What Jesus is saying is absolutely true. Most of the damage done in this world, most of the residual hatred and resentment and brokenness comes from the misuse, or abuse, or **dis-use** of power. When power is misused, it ultimately hurts everyone involved. Let me give you a couple of examples.

- a. Anyone know when women in Canada first had the right to vote? 1918. Women weren't even allowed to own property on their own. I think of the history of the United States, where I was born. I'm embarrassed by the fact that slavery went on, pretty much unchallenged, for 200 years—and then it took a Civil War to stop it. And government sponsored oppression continued until the late 1960s—and it still continues in subtle ways. -We're Canadians! We aren't like that! Really? Do some research on how we've treated First Nations people—what life on a reserve is like. Ever talked to a Japanese-Canadian about what happened to the Japanese people during WW2--and never made right?
- b. Think for just a minute about the social consequences of the “lording” that took place. It affects both the people who wield the power—and people who are oppressed by it—bossed around by it. -What Jesus is saying here gives us amazing insight into how the abuse of power corrupts the human heart. Power like this creates insensitivity—people get used and discarded, hired and fired—treated like they are machines. -And it's not like anyone every says, “You know, I've got **enough** power—I don't need any more. I've got **enough** money, **enough** clout, **enough** popularity. The point in our world is to stand on what you've already got to get more.
- c. Sometimes the problem is not the **abuse** or **misuse** of power—it's the **disuse**. It's where people have a chance to do something, to make a difference with the power handed to them, through a position, or through an opportunity—and they never engage.
3. That's why Jesus said, “We've got to break the paradigm on this and use power to **serve**. To **make a difference!** When power is misused or abused—or **disused**, it messes things up for generations—hundreds of years. It backfires.

B. Jesus put his blessing on qualities that describe how we should live—and specifically, how we should use power. There's one characteristic in particular that relates directly to power—one you may be surprised at. He said that the those who handle power in this way will inherit the earth. Anyone know what it is? **Meekness**. Specifically, **Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5 NIV)**. Now, before you tune me out, let me tell you specifically what it is—cause, I think you'll want it.

-Meekness isn't some little bald guy with spectacles wearing at T-shirt that says, **DOORMAT** on the front and **KICK ME!** on the back. Meekness means, literally, **power under control!** They used this term to describe a wild animal that would be tamed—like a wild stallion—so that it's power could be useful.

1. Let me illustrate this in a way I think most of you guys can appreciate. Know what this picture is? It's a picture of the **Wartsila-Sulzer RTA96-C**—the biggest, most powerful diesel engine in the world! If you want one, you can purchase it with 6 cylinders—all the way through 14 cylinders. But it won't work for your garden tractor—it's 89 feet long, 44 feet high, and weighs 2300 tons. The crankshaft

alone weighs 300 tons. Oh, and you think your SUV is a heavy drinker. This thing consumes 1660 gallons of heavy fuel per hour!

-Now, how many of you think it would make sense to buy one of these things—and occasionally run it in your back yard to impress your neighbors? That's not the point, is it? These things are hooked up to props—and used to move cargo ships. Without something to hook up to—it's just pointless power. It's like a guy who works out all the time and mostly uses his muscle in front of the mirror. Sorry, I couldn't resist that!

a. It's only when power is under control that's it's useful. When it's not, it just consumes time and energy and resources. When power is used to impress or control or stoke someone's ego—it's wasted.

b. How many of you guys are Dads? How many of you want your kids to think you're strong? I do. I tell my kids, "I may be in my early 40s, but I'll still be able to whip you when I'm 80!"

-So, you want your children to know you're strong, that you can take care of your family. How many of you want your kids to be so scared of you they don't even come around you? Meekness is **power under control**. It's not power that wimps out—it's just controlled as something **useful**.

2. Jesus made a very disturbing comment about the kinds of things that come to us in life, whether it's financial advantage, gifts, position—or whatever form of power it might be. Want to know what He said? **To whom much is given, much is required**. If you've got a lot of horsepower under the hood of your life, Jesus is making it clear, "You will be responsible for how well you use it." I think, at heart, we understand that.

-I think we want that. I think guys--especially--want to think, "My family, my world, my workplace, my neighborhood is **better** because of me." In his book, **Wild At Heart**, author John Eldridge, says, "Every man was once a boy. And every little boy has dreams. Big dreams; dreams of being the hero, of beating the bad guys, of doing daring feats..." Sometimes we think that will come some day when we have "super-powers." I personally think that comes when we use the power we have...under control; not in wimping out and doing nothing, but in ways where we become someone's hero.

3. So, what does someone do if they want to be a hero? Well, first, use your power well. When people power up on you—and they will—you'll be tempted to react. To retaliate. Don't waste your time on that because it leads nowhere—and then it escalates into something that siphons off precious time and energy that can be way better used.

-And don't use power to get more power. It's easy to do that, you know. To use your money and influence and authority to get **more** money and influence and authority. If you do that, you'll just create resentment—and a group of people who will laugh at all your jokes—but be secretly waiting for you to go down. Use your power to **make a difference!**

4. I want you to know that under this wimpy exterior, I am a superhero. See? What's the difference between a **villain**, a **wimp**, and a **hero**? Let's use the word Jesus used: **Serve**. Who does a villain or bully use his power to serve? **Self**,

right? Who does a wimp use his power to serve? **No one.** Who does a hero use his power to serve? **Others.**

-Everybody has power. Everybody has influence. Anyone know where it comes from? Pilate, the Roman governor who caved to public opinion and ordered Jesus' execution said him: ***Don't you realize I have the power to either crucify you or set you free?*** Jesus' response blew him away: ***You would have NO power over me if it were not given you from above.***"

-Pilate was responsible for his use of power that day. Legend tells us that he spent the rest of his life washing and re-washing his hands—trying to get Jesus' blood off of them. Everyone is accountable to God—and to the world—for how they have used their power: George Bush, Adolf Hitler, Madonna, Jimmy Swaggart, John Lennon, Bill Gates, Billy Graham. You're accountable too. And so am I. And the criteria will be—who did we **serve?**

5. I want you to know who I'm impressed with. I'm impressed with Jesus—and how He personified power under control. The night before He died, this One who was Lord of all, stripped down to his underwear—and did the filthiest job in that culture, the equivalent of cleaning toilets. Listen to what the Bible says about **why** He could serve so humbly. ***Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God (John 13:3 NLT).***

-If you need big biceps, or a hot car, or a fast boat, or a \$2000 suit, or an impressive title to feel powerful—you've missed the point of power.

-Jesus knew who He was and where he was going. He didn't have to impress anybody. ***Power under control!*** Power submitted to the purposes of God. And He changed history forever—for the better! ***That's POWER!***

IV. CLOSING

- A. Most superhero from movies and comic books look back to something—usually some kind of freak accident—that gave them super-powers. For Petey, it was getting bitten by a spider on steroids that turned him into ***Spiderman.*** David Banner had an accident with some gamma rays in a lab, and became ***The Incredible Hulk.*** My ***hero,*** today, is in a personal care home for a while, struggles to walk any distance, and tends to forget what happened that took him from speaking three times a week to this in a matter of 4 months. It's my Dad.

-Some of you guys are someone's hero. When you look down you don't see six-pack abs. Heck, you've got a whole keg going there! You don't have Spidey powers—or turn into a monster then you get mad. Well, ***some*** of you do. You don't move cars or houses with superpowers—and you don't carry a gun in case you get in trouble. You carry a cell phone. But you're ***somebody's*** hero! And that's a ***good*** thing. If you will do what Jesus says, be ***power under control,*** you'll be a hero for a long time.

- B. Power might come accidentally—but it has to be harnessed to actually make a difference. On those days when you feel small, poor and powerless, you may be surprised that there is a God in Heaven who gave you your longing to make a difference, to be a hero, to have superpowers.

He's *glad* you like power—and you will probably be surprised at the power you have to do incredible good. To be a 9-11 kind of hero with the courage to go up the stairs when everyone else is running for their life. To have Flight 93 courage to save lives—at the cost of your own. To stand when everyone else wimps. The Holy Spirit is the One who gives that power. The power that raised Jesus from the dead. Power to make the difference you'd always hoped you'd made.