

## POWER

1 Do not be silent; there is no limit to the power that may be released through you. **Howard Thurman**

2 Mastering others is strength. Mastering yourself is true power. **Tao Te Ching**

3 As you enter positions of power, dream a little before you think. **Toni Morrison**

4 Language exerts hidden power, like the moon on the tides. **Rita Mae Brown**

5 Never allow a person to tell you no who doesn't have the power to say yes. **Eleanor Roosevelt**

6 [An advantage of being home schooled] My parents would say to me all the time: you can teach yourself anything better than someone else can teach it to you. Which I really think is true. I hate the the word “disempower,” because it seems kind of cliché, but I do think that we take people’s ability to self-teach away by creating this idea that that someone else has to do this for you, that you have to take a course, you have to do it in some formal way. Any curriculum that you design for yourself is going to be better, even if it’s not the absolute perfect one. You will follow what you care about.

**Tara Westover** talking about her memoir, *Educated*

7 I call that mind free, which jealously guards its intellectual rights and powers, which calls no man master, which does not content itself with a passive or hereditary faith, which opens itself to light whencesoever it may come, which receives new truth as an angel from heaven. **William Channing**, *Spiritual Freedom* (1830)

8 You can tell people of the need to struggle, but when the powerless start to see that they really can make a difference, nothing can quench the fire. **Leymah Gbowee**, in the film *Mighty Be Our Powers: How Sisterhood, Prayer, and Sex Changed a Nation at War*

9 Be bold. Step out. And never walk on tiptoes, because anyone who walks on tiptoes can never leave footprints for people to walk in. **Leymah Gbowee**

*Nobel Peace Laureate, Leymah Gbowee, is best known for leading a nonviolent movement that brought together Christian and Muslim women to play a pivotal role in ending Liberia’s fourteen-year civil war in 2003.*

10 There is only one kind of success that really matters: the success of transforming ourselves, transforming our afflictions, fear and anger. This is the kind of success, the kind of power, that will benefit us and others without causing any damage. **Thich Nhat Hanh**, *The Art of Power*

11 ----As I start my fourth year as CEO, I have been struck by the impact of power. Specifically, how my power is perceived by those around me. While I have always understood at an intellectual level that power has an impact, it is difficult to truly grasp the full extent when you're the one with power. The experience of a person who feels powerless in a situation or relationship is entirely different. The role of CEO carries a level of power that is at times difficult to reconcile.

. . . .There are many ways we can use our power, and the first step to using it wisely is becoming aware of our tendencies. One person may become aware of using their power in a forceful way, i.e. "I am the manager and therefore you must..." Another may need to develop their assertiveness so their voice can be heard. For myself, I need to ask even more questions of those around me. While I cannot control others' response to their perception of my power, I can set a stronger tone of inquiry. Inquiry is a method for me to balance out the inherent power in a CEO role. There are many, many examples of how one might need to develop skills in the 'wise use of power.' **Belinda Kindsche**, writing online for her company, Service Alternatives, Inc.

12  
On the Steps of the Jefferson Memorial

We invent our gods  
the way the Greeks did,  
in our own image—but magnified.  
Athena, the very mother of wisdom,  
squabbled with Poseidon  
like any human sibling  
until their furious tempers  
made the sea writhe.

Zeus wore a crown  
of lightning bolts one minute,  
a cloak of feathers the next,  
as driven by earthly lust  
he prepared to swoop  
down on Leda.  
Despite their power,  
frailty ran through them

like the darker veins  
in the marble of these temples  
we call monuments.  
Looking at Jefferson now,  
I think of the language  
he left for us to live by.  
I think of the slave  
in the kitchen downstairs.

**Linda Pastan**, from *Prairie Schooner* (Summer 2007)

### **For Reflection and Discussion**

A Did this month's spiritual theme surprise you? What first came to mind?

B Can you recall a time when you were particularly aware of your own power or powerlessness? How did that feel? What occurs to you now as you think back on the incident?

C Does Belinda Kindsche's description of power dynamics at work (#11) ring true to your experience? As you reflect on your experience, are there changes you'd like to make in your own behavior?

D Have there been situations when you exercised power particularly skillfully or unskillfully? In what ways?

E How does your experience at All Souls add to your understanding of "power"? How does it help you navigate your own power and powerlessness and the power and powerlessness you see around you?

---Mary Beth Hatem, for covenant groups at All Souls Church, Unitarian