

The Right And Wrong Use Of Power

Read the following.

You may think you have no power. You are wrong. The fact that you can read and write gives you power. Across the world, are all children of your age able to read and write? No. Are the majority of children of your age able to read and write? Still the answer is no. Who are more powerful: those who have been taught or those who have not?

You may think: big deal. So I can read and write. I still don't feel powerful. Alright, let's look at other kinds of power. You have power over those weaker than yourself. You have physical power. You might have a quick wit, a strong personality, be a natural leader; all these things give you power in some degree. You may have special talents that make others look up to you. This, again, tends to add to your power. You are more powerful than you think.

Alright. So you don't have the power to tell the teacher to stuff the homework because you're on permanent vacation. But teachers, and others in authority, have to obey certain regulations and be responsible and professional. The big dream of the office worker is to win a load of money and spend a joyful day insulting the bosses and refusing to do anything they're told. It sounds lovely. The trouble is that even if you had loads of money (and, therefore, lots of power) you would still not be completely relaxed. Your money would tend to overpower you. You might be driven to selfish worrying over your fortune and become a prisoner of your cares.

This brings me to another point. It isn't only people who boss you around. Some of the most powerful forces are hatred and bitterness. Hatred and bitterness can trap your whole self and make you terribly unhappy.

Anyway, enough blabbing. The thing is: if you have power (and you do) how is it to be used? When is it being abused? What about governments? Do they always use their power fairly?

1. Reread the first two sentences.
Write about a time when you felt a) powerless, b) powerful.
2. Do you think education gives you power? Explain.
3. Having reflected a little about power, try to explain the meaning of the following passage from scripture. What does Jesus say to his disciples about the proper use of power?

A dispute arose also between them about which should be reckoned the greatest, but he said to them, 'Among pagans it is the kings who lord it over them, and those who have authority over them are given the title Benefactor. This must not happen with you. No; the greatest among you must behave as if he were the youngest, the leader as if he were the one who serves. For who is the greater: the one at table or the one who serves? The one at table, surely? Yet here am I among you as one who serves.

Luke 22:24-27

Cross-curricular

4. Some governments in the world use power wrongly. They **abuse** their power. All over the world there are those who have tried to speak out against the injustice of their governments only to be imprisoned, perhaps tortured, perhaps killed.

Amnesty International fights for the rights of those who have been victims of power abuse. You will be learning a bit more about their work. Not only does this organisation protest to governments and world authorities for the rights of all, but also it tries to make people aware of some of the terrible things going on behind closed doors, in prisons, in dark dungeons.

Design a poster to help Amnesty International get across its message.