

“Real Power”

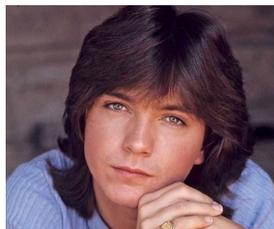
By Allan Pole



Theme: Only God paves the road to eternal influence.

Text: Revelation 2:18-29

Here's a thought: The Greek philosopher, Plato, concluded, “The measure of a man is what he does with power.”



David Cassidy was an icon in the '70s. It wasn't uncommon to see posters of the teen heartthrob lining the bedrooms of junior high girls across [North] America. He was the breakout star of *The Partridge Family* and continued soaring into fame independently from his TV family once the series ended [in 1974]. Despite living such a glamorous and highly public life when the cameras were rolling, the star was deeply troubled behind the scenes (www.idolator.com/7681651/the-tragic-life-of-david-cassidy?safari=1).

The heartthrob struggled with alcoholism after becoming a wonderkid in the 1970s. His father, actor Jack Cassidy, also struggled with alcoholism. David Cassidy's struggle with alcoholism seemed to peak in the early 2010s. From the turn of the decade to 2014, he was arrested three times for driving drunk, the last two arrests coming within six months of each other and landing him in rehab in South Florida. Cassidy died of liver failure at the age of 67 in November 2017 (www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2018/06/06/i-lied-about-my-drinking-david-cassidy-drank-to-his-death-to-cover-up-the-sadness).

The world's form of power and influence is so fleeting! When you see someone in the media spotlight you think that the world will never forget this powerful figure – but sooner or later this individual fades into obscurity.

What is lasting power? What is *real* power? Revelation 2:18-29 points to it:

18 To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. 19 I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first. 20 Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. 21 I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. 22 So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. 23 I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. 24 Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): 25 Only hold on to what you have until I come. 26 To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations – 27 “He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery” - just as I have received authority from my Father. 28 I will also give him the morning star. 29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. NIV

You can pursue power the way of:

Jezebel



Thyatira was the smallest of the seven cities addressed yet it had the longest message in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. Unlike the previous cities addressed, Thyatira had no temple devoted to the worship of the emperors. Instead, it was noted for its commerce and trade. The workers within these trades organized themselves into guilds, similar to our workers unions today. Each of these guilds, however, would adopt a god or idol to bring them good fortune. Have you ever had a hard time with the morals at your company's Christmas party? Well, when these workers got together in Thyatira their carrying on would make today's company Christmas party seem like a Sunday School picnic.

Into such wild living stepped a prophetess that pursued power. You can read about Jezebel in the books of 1 and 2 Kings. She was the wife of Ahab, king of

Israel during dark days in Jewish history - more than 800 years B.C. Jezebel's husband, Ahab, is portrayed as a spineless, snivelling wimp that allowed a power-hungry, controlling person call the shots in the home and in the kingdom. Through Jezebel's influence the nation of Israel plunged even deeper into idolatry and practices that were an offence to the one true God. She did all she could to make life difficult for the prophets of God as they spoke the words of God.

Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre and Sidon. Her father had formerly been a priest of the goddess Asherah, but had violently removed his brother Phelles from the throne. Jezebel followed in her father's footsteps.

The first effect of Jezebel's influence was the immediate establishment of the Phoenician worship on a grand scale in the court of Ahab. At her table were supported no less than 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah (1 Kings 16:31-32; 18:19), whereas the prophets of the Lord were slain by her orders (18:13; 9:7).

Jezebel had so many "yes men" working for her that her country could have been called "the Land of Nod."

If you have been around church circles for some time you might have heard people talk about Jezebel or the spirit of Jezebel. This typically refers to a woman that has a problem with authority – particularly male authority – and through control and manipulation causes division and rebellion.

What was at the core of Jezebel? It was a misguided drive for power. She was convinced that she understood real power.

The Greek philosopher, Plato, concluded, "The measure of a man [or woman] is what he [or she] does with power."

2 Kings 9:30-37 graphically describes the end result of Jezebel's pursuit of power:

30 Then Jehu went to Jezreel. When Jezebel heard about it, she painted her eyes, arranged her hair and looked out of a window. 31 As Jehu entered the gate, she asked, "Have you come in peace, Zimri, you murderer of your master?" 32 He looked up at the window and called out, "Who is on my side? Who?" Two or three eunuchs looked down at him. 33 "Throw her down!" Jehu said. So they threw her down, and some of her blood splattered the wall and the horses as they trampled her underfoot. 34 Jehu went in and ate and drank. "Take care of that cursed woman," he said, "and bury her, for she was a king's daughter." 35 But when they went out to bury her, they found nothing except her skull, her feet and her hands. 36 They went back and told Jehu, who said, "This is the word of the LORD that he spoke through his servant Elijah the Tishbite: On the plot of ground at Jezreel dogs will devour Jezebel's flesh. 37 Jezebel's body will be

like refuse on the ground in the plot at Jezreel, so that no one will be able to say, 'This is Jezebel.'" NIV

Worshipping under a religious disguise in the church in Thyatira was a woman like Jezebel. I doubt she really had the name Jezebel but when this name was used to describe such a woman everyone in the church would understand what was meant.

The whole book of Revelation is about power and the clash between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of God. The vision given to the Apostle John places an exclamation mark on the end of world history with contrasting futures for Satan and those who follow him and Jesus and those who follow Him. Satan and his followers are thrown into the Lake of Fire to burn forever while Jesus and His followers enjoy the new heavens and the new earth forever.

Years ago I worked with an ambitious employee for a natural gas compressor company in Calgary. Through one side of his mouth he claimed to be a Christian and through the other side of his mouth he advised me, "You've got to look out for number one." Translation: "When it comes to promotions and looking good in front of the boss one's own interests are priority. It doesn't matter who you step on to get to the top."

Jezebel lives today! This same kind of evil spirit fools people into thinking that the way to real power is found in stepping on other people and in getting all that you can out of them. Beware of this mentality creeping into your own head.

You can pursue power the way of:

Jezebel

or

Jesus



The city [of Thyatira] boasted a special temple to Apollo, the [Greek] "sun god," which explains why the Lord introduced Himself as "the Son of God" (the only time in Revelation this title is used). John had to deliver a message of severe warning and judgment to this congregation, which explains the description of the Lord's eyes and feet (from Warren Wiersbe's commentary). What a contrast between Jezebel and Jesus!

Jesus was tempted by the devil in Matthew 4:8-10:

8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." 10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" NIV

Every day people around the world agree to make these exchanges with Satan. Most of them don't realize it, but he tempts them to pursue power Satan's way in exchange for their souls.

Jesus shows that the way up is down in John 13:3-5:

3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. NIV

Jesus went on to instruct His followers to do the same. I have been in a foot-washing service and it can be a humbling and powerful act. The principle behind this gesture by Jesus is more profound than most of us understand. Where the soil is dry and dusty and sandals are worn, frequent washing of the feet becomes not only a luxury, but a necessity for comfort and health. It is as much a part of hospitality, under these circumstances, for a host to see that his guests' feet are washed, as it is to provide them with food, or to furnish them a place of rest. This work was the duty of a servant and it is this fact which gives force to the beautiful symbolic action of our Lord. The Master of all became a servant to all!

One day a sergeant came into the barracks and asked his men if any of them knew shorthand. The recruits thought it would be easy duty so they raised their hands.

"Good," said the sergeant. "They're shorthanded in the mess hall!"

If you want to be an overseer or leader in the work of God – which the Bible commends as a noble desire – the way up is down. Your potential as a powerful leader is directly proportionate to your heart for humble service.

Skip Moen declares, "I would rather have God know my name and be His anonymous servant than have everyone on earth give me a round of applause."

For years my dad took it upon himself to pick up trash and straighten the hymn books after our church meetings every Sunday. No one had asked him to do it and most people did not notice that he did it. However, *I* did and I remember it many years later. I am certain that the Lord noticed.

The next time Jesus Christ comes to the earth the world will see a much different side of Him. This time He will come in great splendour and glory rather than as a little baby in a manger outside of an inn that had no room for Him. This time He will decisively crush His enemies and reward His faithful and humble servants with positions of never-ending power. More than such universal power His people will be given Jesus Himself – who the Bible calls the morning star (see Revelation 22:16). Real power is secondary to – and flows out of – intimacy with Jesus Himself.

Take a step back and reflect on your relationships: are you looking for what others can do for *you* or for what *you* can do for *them*?

Which road are you travelling down toward power?

You can pursue power the way of:

Jezebel

or

Jesus

Only God paves the road to eternal influence.

