



LEAD WITH ...OUT BEING AN A\$\$HOLE

FOUR POSTURES
FAITH LEADERS TAKE
TOWARD POWER



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THE CHURCH'S POWER PROBLEM

If you're reading this guide, most likely it's because you have been part of a toxic faith-based leadership system before. *Maybe you're still in one.* Your position may be one of authority, where you're seeing and grieving the damage you've done while trying to do good. Or you may be and feel like one cog amongst many in a relentlessly grinding wheel. Perhaps it's a bit of both.

And now you're trying to find a better way, to lead in a way that actually aligns with your deepest values and the Jesus preached each Sunday. We see you - you're our kind of people. If we can, we'd love to help.

There are forces at work in your leadership system that church folks don't usually talk about. But it's time. If we want to love and lead well, we have to start talking honestly about power.

What is Power?

Brené Brown echoes MLK, defining power as "the ability to achieve purpose and effect change."*

- A high power system is effective in achieving its goals.
- A low power system is ineffective.

How Do We Hold Power?

Brown describes two basic orientations to power:

- "Power Over" - uses fear and control to try to win over & against others.
- "Power With/To/Within" - assumes everyone can win, working together.*

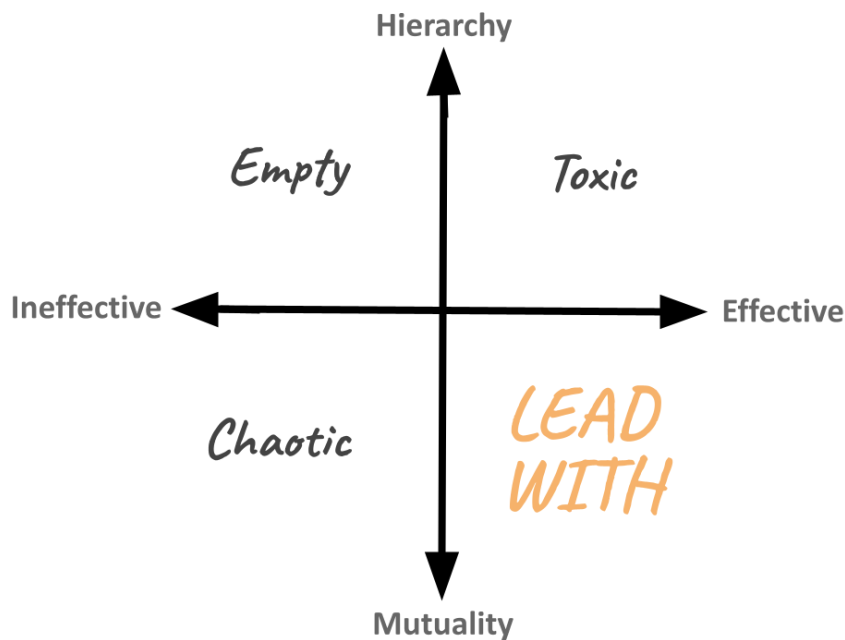
These orientations create systems of either HIERARCHY or MUTUALITY.

Questions for Reflection

- Pick one strong memory you have of being led or being a leader. What emotions does that memory of power bring up for you?
- Pick a leadership system you are or have been part of. Would you describe it as effective or ineffective in achieving its goals? Why?
- Would you describe that system's orientation towards power as "over" or "with" others? Why?

LET'S PUT IT ALL TOGETHER

Using your answers to the reflection questions on page 2, in which quadrant of the Four Postures does your leadership system fall? How would you explain the "why" behind that posture for your system?



An Ineffective Hierarchical System is theoretically organized around authority and control, but does not accomplish its goals. Followers may experience lack of care, as well as confusion much like in an Ineffective Mutual System. They explain the confusion differently, as a leadership vacuum. This system is EMPTY.

An Ineffective Mutual System is loosely organized around inclusivity and cooperation, but tends not to accomplish its goals. Goals and plans to achieve them are unclear, so participants experience this system as caring but CHAOTIC.

An Effective Hierarchical System is organized around command and control and accomplishes its goals. Sadly, people are often hurt and excluded along the way. Followers tend to experience this system as TOXIC.

An Effective Mutual System is organized around inclusivity and cooperation and uses collaborative practices to set and meet their goals. Participants experience this system as both warm & empowering. This is the LEAD WITH posture.

YOU CAN LEARN TO LEAD WITH

Your leadership system is where it is for a reason,
but not necessarily a good one.

- If it's EMPTY, you may feel a guilty obligation to find or build one strong leader (perhaps yourself!) to take charge. *The LEAD WITH alternative draws out the gifts of the whole community in exciting new ways!*
- If it's TOXIC, most likely there's fear that any other way would lead to ineffective ministry. *LEADing WITH is both effective and soul-satisfying!*
- If it's CHAOTIC, most likely there's fear that any other way would require people (including you) to be a\$\$holes. *LEADing WITH means caring and inclusion AND actually getting good Jesus-y stuff done!*

If your heart is onboard, you can learn to share power. You just need some new practices to help you hold power generously and collaboratively, plus some community for support.

FREE WEBINAR

**LEAD WITH
...OUT BEING AN A\$\$HOLE**



smallchurchbigtable.com

Join us for a **free 55 minute webinar** to connect with like-hearted leaders & explore:

- emotions & past influences around power that could be hurting your ministry
- your sense of calling & conviction toward inclusive, collaborative leadership
- next steps in learning to share power & LEAD WITH

Register today:

[smallchurchbigtable.com/
bigtablecoaching](http://smallchurchbigtable.com/bigtablecoaching)



Brenna Rubio and Bill White co-pastor a small, unfancy but potent community: City Church Long Beach in California. (FAQ: no, they're not married.) Between them, they have five decades of pastoral training and learning from mistakes big and small.

They started Small Church Big Table as a resource for fellow leaders, especially in smaller and just-getting-started churches, who have come to them over the years looking for safe space to process questions around faith, deconstruction, inclusion, justice and leadership.

Big Table Coaching helps deconstructing faith leaders dismantle toxic leadership patterns and learn power sharing practices to build potent, inclusive communities.

We're a nonprofit in development, currently being incubated by City Church Long Beach. Many leaders who want to learn a new way forward are hard-pressed financially. Donations help us offer generous scholarships to those who need them. Your tax-deductible gift can be made HERE.



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***Acknowledgments & Further Reading**

Brené Brown, research professor, University of Houston and author of "Brené Brown on Power and Leadership." <https://brenebrown.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Brene-Brown-on-Power-and-Leadership-10-26-20.pdf>

The whole PDF should be required reading for leaders.

Of course, our linking to it does not imply any endorsement by Brené Brown of our work.
