

However, these rationalizations began to weaken the day I was testing an application using live data that included a cargo manifest containing a few odd entries. I quickly realized these anomalies were the bodies of deceased US military personnel. What a discomfoting and perplexing feeling it is to be surrounded by coworkers in a sterile and intensely air conditioned computer lab in which the ambient sound is comprised almost entirely of the gentle roar of thousands of computer fans whirring, and connecting the arranged pixels of a computer screen to the realization that someone sacrificed themselves for the notion of country; that this person has loved ones who will cry out in pain and sadness as a casket is lowered into the earth; that these pixels are a sort of digital tombstone representing the total culmination of this person's growth and experiences. I had not supported the Iraq War nor the invasion of Afghanistan, so why was I assuming a supporting role? Debt is a heavy handed and often cruel master.

I wish I could write with sincerity that God graced me with the wisdom and clairvoyance to become immediately cognizant that I was working as a sort of mercenary complicit in institutionalized killing, but in reality, it took another year or two after this event to be where I am today. I ask God daily to give me the fortitude to not just resist those bluntly insisting upon bloodshed in war and on our streets as a necessary evil, but to reject these myths wholeheartedly. I ask for help in filling the vast void of imagination and genuine thought pertaining to not simply avoiding conflict, but answering it loudly with the love instilled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. It is this love that allows me to strive to stop being subhuman and fulfill what it truly means to be made in the image of God. Going beyond this, it is my hope to give others the capacity to follow. Christ is the great redeemer.

Having been on the other side of the fence in which I lined my own pockets with tax payer money, I want to bring to light the disdain for those within the military, particularly the enlisted, as well as individuals working for multinational war mongers. I merely want to create some thought in how we receive and interact with them and how we love them, as it becomes all too easy to shoehorn them into a nice, neat box to rally against. I simply ask if this is what Christ did in regard to Nicodemus being a Pharisee, or Peter with Cornelius being a Roman centurion.

The phrase of "For God and Country" and the inability to distinguish the two has come to dominate the zeitgeist of our country. With each generation, the ability to kill or maim enemies becomes more efficient and far reaching. That anyone would gladly accept others ideals via the muzzle of a gun is specious at best. Today's swords look radically different than those of Isaiah's time, and yet our ploughshares remain relatively the same. Do not be fooled into thinking a few millennia has somehow changed the motives or aims of death dealers, nor Christ's triumph over death. The current defense budget is now over half a trillion dollars. Lord hear our prayer.

Blessed are those who go beyond mere rhetoric and put into motion the response to the wielding of violence that continues the suppression of true life. Blessed are the war tax protesters. Blessed are those who find their freedom in Christ and not Homeland Security. Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.

# Power

Circle of Hope

Fall 2010

## What do we do with Power? *By Joshua Grace*

In simplest terms, we need to acknowledge the power we have and use it for God. I'm not just talking about amassing power so we can do something "for good," but actually being filled with the Holy Spirit and letting God's love pour out of us.

Especially living in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century United States, there are important questions like *how did we get the power?* Is it by being born into a certain gender, race, and class situation? Did we get power through inherited wealth or social capital that we didn't earn? How much have we participated in sucking up power from people across the world that we have never seen? Is it relevant that people around me have more power so I might feel like I might not have as much responsibility?

God is unleashing power through the church. I want to explore God's power being *poured out*. This gushing, shedding (of blood) or metaphorical bestowing is a common theme in both the Old (Hebrew *shaphak*, 115 times) and New (Greek *ekcheō*, 28 times) Testaments. God pours out his love (Romans 5), his wrath (Ezekiel 7) and even own Spirit (Titus 3) upon us and through us. King David pours out complaints before God (Psalm 142). Jesus pours out his blood for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 14). For us, while discerning what to do with power, let's look to Jesus in the beginning of the gospel according to Mark when the same word\* comes up.

*Mark 2:22 And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If one does, the wine will burst\* the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins."*

Jesus is demonstrating a paradigm shift about holiness and being made new rather than living right according to the rules, laws, and traditions. If we can be new wineskins for the new kind of redemption, we're not going to get caught on the same snags that tripped us up when we were living as normal people. If we're not made renewed, the new wine will burst us and we'll still be out of control. When we become like new wineskins, we can hold God's power and be used effectively and appropriately for the LORD. If you want to know what God thinks about power, we're going to have to listen as renewed people. Here are some practical tips for living with power as people renewed in Jesus and filled with the Holy Spirit.

**Be grateful.** One part of the renewed life is gratitude for what God has provided. Sometimes that seems like material possessions like an air conditioner given during the heat wave or food like a loaf of bread to the hungry. Take it deeper and see how God provides the orbit of the created earth around the sun, for the water and food you had today, for the relationships you have, and for this very moment of dwelling in us and with us.

**Own your power.** There is a common tension in the world between someone who is disempowered and someone with power but in denial. For one to behave of see themselves as powerless while they are sitting on a pile

## Pax Americana *by Anthony So*



I want to empathize with those graduating from high schools or universities within the current economic environment, as I was released into the workforce in the aftermath of the DOT COM bubble bursting, but I cannot. The destruction wrought by the hedging and leveraging of this decade's capitalist number wizards has created an effect not felt by any of us born after the era of the OPEC oil crisis. However, I can sympathize with how disheartening it is to have endured those four or so years only to be thrust out, diploma in hand, naive to the machinations of the systems in place, and sadly, ignorant of many realities that come with adulthood; whatever that may be. A diploma promises those who acquire it a guaranteed job with salaries that are supposed to scale based upon an equation involving variables like vocational demand and the number of years sequestered away in the vacuum of academia. This is the great promise sold to those seeking to rise out of their current social class or at least break even. Highest bidder takes all.

Following graduation and armed with a seemingly vast knowledge of things like lambda calculus and Turing machines, I decided seeking refuge in my parents' basement was more attractive for launching a job seeking campaign than continuing to wait tables and donate plasma on my off days. Nine months later and a few hundred dead end applications, some moonlighting as a substitute teacher, and the occasional skimming of an out-of-date What Color is Your Parachute printing, I found myself living within the confines of the Capital Beltway. It was the beginning of my career as a defense contractor to the greatest military the world has ever seen.

For the next four plus years, I helped to author and maintain a large scale system utilized by the Joint Chiefs of Staff in their decision making regarding the various combatant commands spanning the globe. In the context of this century and the United States, I can attest to the oft repeated quote on empires that "on her dominions the sun never sets".

Working under the umbrella of one of the largest defense contracting corporations in the world, I rationalized my occupation in terms of civic duty and the theory of American Exceptionalism, coupled with the fact that nothing I made was directly involved with a physical weapons system. It also did not hurt that I was being adequately compensated for my time, which allowed me to begin casting off the shackles of loan debt.

supposed to work eight hours, but I have to work ten hours and I'm not getting paid for the extra time. I am being exploited, but I can't complain because of my immigration status." Many migrant workers are exploited, either because they don't know their rights or because they fear deportation. Even those here legally have a slim chance of becoming citizens.

**4. Ensure access to basic benefits and services for those lawfully present, while avoiding policies that seek to deter access to public health and safety services and lead to a culture of fear and isolation in immigrant communities.**

Krista Zimmerman met with a group of migrant workers in California in 2007: "All of the men talked openly about their fear of law enforcement officials and the unfortunate results of that fear. When the farm workers suffer crime, they rarely call the police. They worry about the immigration consequences should law enforcement officials discover one of their community is here without legal documents. Criminals know this fear exists and intentionally target them."

**5. Choose border security strategies that protect community rights, human dignity, and the natural environment while opposing policies that contribute to deaths and increased fear in immigrant communities.**

Maria Lucia Martinez Nava, 26, was one of an estimated 328 people who died trying to cross into the U.S. from Mexico in 2004. As the border becomes increasingly militarized, many migrants choose to cross in more remote areas. In addition to human deaths, border fences are also severing migration routes for endangered species and causing extensive environmental damage.

**6. Address political instability and economic disparity in migrants' home countries caused, in part, by U.S. foreign policies and trade agreements. Create incentives for sustainable development.**

A participant in the 2007 Migration and Trade Learning Tour described what he saw in an industrial park in Nogales, Mexico: "Together we stood on a hill and looked down on a community where most of the workers of the maquilas came from. As we looked over the hill we could see the poor community with its shacks for homes and meandering dirt roads. When we turned to the other side we could see a number of large maquilas, modern U.S.-owned factories and a row of nice houses for managers of the companies. Two communities stood in sharp contrast."

**7. End indiscriminate raids and detention for non-dangerous immigrants, while targeting enforcement efforts on drug, weapon and people smugglers.**

Hui Lui Ng, a computer engineer from China who was applying for a green card through his wife, was arrested when immigration authorities found he had overstayed a visa years ago. While in detention, Ng was repeatedly denied medical care for what turned out to be a fractured spine and cancer. Ng, 34, died last summer in detention.

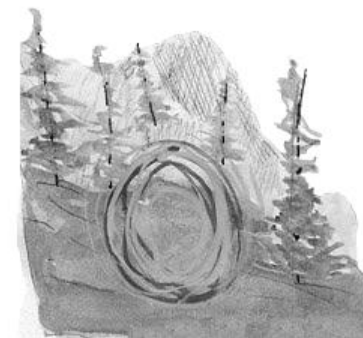
of possibility is a misinterpretation of the situation. There are certain things that you have. There are certain things that you can change. Most people reading this article are likely not going to be in danger of true destitution. You can get a different job. You can get out of the bad relationship. You can sell your house. You can downsize to one car (or no car). One is much easier to relate to when they have a healthy sense of reality about what they have and what they can potentially do. You don't need to flaunt it, but it's helpful to own it.

**Hold on loosely.** During a scarcity blitz including obsessing about the economy, the looming police state, perpetual pre-emptive war, and corporation domination the temptation is to hold on to your power (resources, respect, future prospects) tighter than ever. To hold on loosely to your power is to have it and own it while being ready to let go completely as God might lead.

**Be poured out well.** God wants others to know his love through you. That's an empowering thought. If we are gratefully owning our power loosely, we can use it best. Sometimes we give power away. Sometimes we build power to stand up to the Powers That Be. Sometimes we use power to imagine a fuller picture of what God wants to do and discern the practical applications. Sometimes we use power to heal, to give birth, to build up, to provide, or to protect.

When God's power is poured out through the church, you'll find people with a healthy sense of their own limits and a healthy imagination for what God can do through them. Jesus' world redemption project carries on through an empowered church that does not merely compete, dominate, draw unto itself, mutilate, or coerce. We are learning to use the power we have from God for God's work.

**Imaginative Meditation by Prayerhead**



Study of scripture is important, as is critical thinking and application. Another aspect of developing the inner life is imaginative meditation. You need very few things.

Quiet, about half an hour per day, and an openness to explore the words from the Lover in a way that you can hear and internalize are about all you need.

Begin by finding a passage where Jesus is speaking. See if you can narrow down a passage into a paragraph, a paragraph into a sentence, and finally a sentence into a single phrase. If you were using Luke 12:22-34 and Jesus' exhortation not to worry, you might read the passage, narrow to the last paragraph, and then settle on "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom."

Like many traditions hold, try to engage God through as many of your senses as you can. This is going to require some imagination beyond the information provided in the text, and that's okay. You're going for personal interaction historical reconstruction.

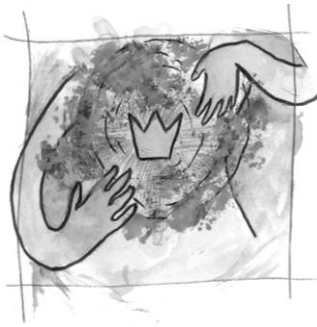
What time of day is Jesus speaking? What is the weather like? Can you smell flowers in the desert or the salty breeze off the sea? Can you hear mountain birds swirling around or chirping ones in low trees?

It will probably take a few minutes to get settled enough to where you are there with Jesus on the mountainside. Now your work is to hear him speaking to you and to internalize his words. "Do not be afraid" might be followed with your name. What might the inflection of his voice sound like?

What fears are can you leave right there? What courage can you receive? What is it like to sit in the pleasure of God as you receive the kingdom?

This kind of imaginative prayer can put you in a place with God that gets really personal and makes the words of Jesus alive in new ways. It does take some practice, and regularity helps develop the discipline so we can experience God in fuller ways.

**Women and the Power Within** by Gwen White



I have an old book from the 1980s on my bookshelf that is titled: "The Wish for Power and the Fear of Having It." That title captures much of the complexity of the topic of power, especially as it relates to the ways our

**1. Ensure a legal pathway to citizenship for immigrants currently living in the United States, without requiring unworkable fines or "touchback" provisions.**

The West Coast MCC tells of a family who came to the U.S. from Indonesia, seeking asylum from persecution and violence. Their application for legal asylum was repeatedly denied. As undocumented immigrants, they were afraid of being deported, but even more afraid to return home. Because the legal pathway to citizenship is so mired in bureaucracy, many immigrants are forced to make this difficult choice.

**2. Maintain the current family-based immigration system and increase the number of available family visas, so that families can reunite and immigrate together in a legal and timely way.**

Former MCC Summer Service Worker Claudia Jiménez knows firsthand the difficulties of family separation. Claudia's family moved to the U.S. when she was 6, but Claudia and her mother had to return to Mexico two years later to fulfill U.S. immigration requirements. Her father remained in the U.S. to work. It wasn't until Claudia was 11 that she and her mother were able to move back to the U.S. permanently. Many families today have to wait several years to be reunited.

Visa Restrictions for Family Members of US Legal Residents

Citizenship Status of U.S. Family Member	Relationship of Immigrant to U.S. Family Member*	Annual Limit	Wait time for Visas in this Category
U.S. Citizen	spouse, unmarried minor child, parent	unlimited†	up to 12 mo.
	unmarried adult children	23,400	6 to 17 years
U.S. Legal Permanent Resident	spouse, minor child	87,900	4 to 6 years
	unmarried adult children	26,300	8 to 17 years
U.S. Citizen	married adult children	23,400	9 to 18 years
	brothers and sisters	65,000	10 to 23 years

\* A minor child (under age 21) cannot sponsor an adult parent.  
 † The annual limit for all family-based visas is 480,000; however, fewer than 240,000 are issued each year.

**3. Create just and fair guest worker programs, along with appropriate oversight mechanisms, to protect labor rights such as fair wages, employer choice and due process protections. Provide the opportunity for immigrant workers to apply for permanent status and, eventually, citizenship.**

One migrant worker told an interviewer for the Listening Project, "I am only

If you want to hear the stories of people using nonviolent action around the world, I recommend listening to Democracy Now! The War and Peace report at [www.democracynow.org](http://www.democracynow.org). Some of the local stations and channels are [MiND-TV, Ch. 35.1 & 35.2](#) and [WPEB 88.1 FM](#).

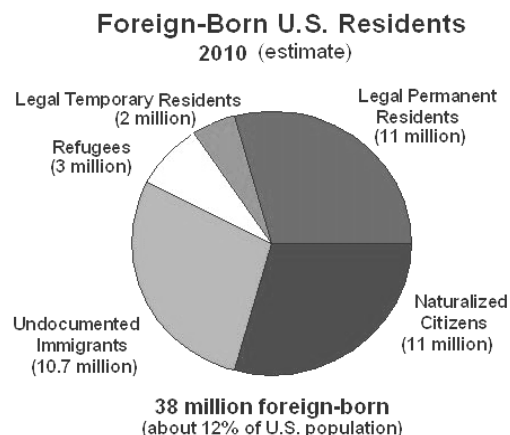
## Welcoming the Stranger by Curtis Book

Throughout biblical history, God's people were often migrants and exiles. Wherever they camped or settled, God instructed them to welcome and protect strangers from other lands. Leviticus 19:33-34 tells us "When foreigners reside among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigners residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God."

We in turn are entrusted with care for the strangers who live among us. But in the United States today, immigration and race are emotional issues. To mention them sets off heated debate because of the fear of change. This fear has led Arizona to craft law enforcement legislation as the answer to our broken immigration system. But police action, detention and deportation are reactive, not proactive. They do not address the root causes of our immigration problem. It will require compromise immigration reform.

The immigration debate is usually introduced with statistics: 12 million undocumented immigrants, 4,000 border crossing deaths, 700 miles of fencing. But to really see the human face of immigration it is essential to hear the stories.

If we want to truly model the compassion of Jesus, we must put ourselves in the shoes of new immigrant. Before crafting policy solutions, we must consider how those solutions will affect real people's lives.



Here are the seven principles of the 2009 MCC U.S. Immigration Policy Principles which MCC considers important in any Comprehensive Immigration Reform legislation:

culture expects women to experience and use it. There are so many mixed messages about our bodies, our tasks, our attitudes, our very selves out there in the media, in the socialization process we go through and embedded in our own internal dialogues. The subject of power mixes with all of these. I'd like to focus here on what might be called *intrinsic power* rather than *attributed power* that comes from positions we achieve or roles we play. Intrinsic power is the power that comes from who we are, from what is within us. Emerson once wrote: "Every natural power exhilarates;/A true talent delights the/ possessor first" (The Scholar). It's this internal process I'd like to explore.

I'm referring to that sense of competence or potency that stirs within us when we are able to deal with the world around us (outside of us) effectively. It is the power to think, feel, know, love. It's operating when we access our own will or sense of a secure self and connect this with our sense of belonging or place in the larger world and in our relationships. For some women (and men, as well) this is a rare or foreign experience. Power tends to be understood in the realm of the external world. A person can have power to get things done or to somehow exercise power over others. But true power I would argue comes from within; it is intrinsic. I'd also argue that this intrinsic power is a gift of God for Christians and comes from our ability to connect with what's going on inside us, not outside us, where the Holy Spirit now dwells. Christ in you, the hope of glory, as Colossians puts it.

How does one come to know this intrinsic power and use it in ways that are productive and helpful? This challenging question goes to the heart of the issue. How can you and I connect with the power within, where Christ dwells? For anyone who has tried to live authentically like this, step one usually involves becoming aware of how disconnected we often are from ourselves. Simply stated our inner worlds are fragmented. Sometimes we don't know what we want to do and we don't have a clear understanding of the wide variety of feelings going through us in the moment. We become preoccupied with presenting ourselves to others in a manner that we hope they will accept or be pleased by and in the process we end up losing our authentic selves. For many women, genuinely allowing ourselves to feel what we actually feel is quite threatening. We stifle our impulses. We redirect our anger or our aggression. We do this because we believe that to express these would threaten our relationships with others. So we end up sacrificing our selves in order to preserve relationships in which we are not allowing our true selves to show up. A despairing kind of loneliness is often the result. It's also a recipe for depression. We are shattered selves. I believe the call of Christ is a call to wholeness, to a slow mending of these fractures and to an integration of all the fragments of ourselves into a new, true self that doesn't split off parts of who we are.

To live a life connected to the intrinsic power that is ours as children of God and followers of Jesus, we must heal the splits within us. We need to remember to feel what we feel in the moments of our lives. This does not mean that we must act out all our feelings, but we do have to notice them and I would suggest we take the time to listen to them. When strong feelings emerge, we often flee into diverting behaviors. We might blame others for our feelings. We might try to numb ourselves from all feeling (alcohol/other

substances are often a ready aid in this process). But we rarely have the courage to feel them. To sit in silence and notice the rage or the fear that is bubbling inside. To name it and wait through the torrent until we can understand the intent of these feelings. What has been violated inside us? What values are at risk in the situation/relationship that has triggered these responses within us? What do we wish for? Trying to stay open to God in the midst of strong emotion is tough. It is also life-giving and it can be life-directing, I have found. For those who take this narrow path, there's much joy in the discovery of the power to live authentically by the call of our God. This inner power goes to the core of our being and can satisfy profound longing in us. It allows us to leave behind the need to attain power granted by others in our external world, and instead to be swallowed up in grace and in gratitude for all we have been given, for our true selves loved and redeemed by the God of all power, mercy, and peace.

### **Nonviolent Action** by Mimi Copp

From his teachings, Jesus left us with a challenge. Deal with your conflicts. Don't avoid them (Matthew 18). Do not retaliate against violence with violence (Matthew 5). Find another way (Matthew 5). So what's another way? A vast history and present, provide examples for us to consider when responding to Jesus' challenge.

The World Cup has been such exciting time this summer. It feels like it brings so many people together around the world. But the underbelly of the World Cup in South Africa reveals the exclusion zones set up around stadiums to keep street traders out or the displacement of people in shack settlements and their demolition as part of beautification campaigns. The people affected by these measures are responding with their own campaign called the "Upside Down World Cup." They are making themselves visible in response to actions trying to make them invisible. Shack dwellers in Cape Town will be breaking the exclusion zones and risking arrest, to set up shacks in order to show people how they live. This action is a type of physical intervention called *Nonviolent Invasion*. It's # 170 on the list of *198 Methods of Nonviolent Action* compiled by Nonviolent Action scholar Gene Sharp.<sup>1</sup> Nonviolent Action "is a technique of action for applying power in a conflict by using symbolic protests, non-cooperation, and defiance, but not physical violence."<sup>1</sup>

The flotilla that left Turkey in June sailing for Gaza with humanitarian aid because of the 3-year Israeli blockade on Gaza, was implementing a type of economic intervention, *Defiance of Blockades*; #184 on the list of *Methods*. On June 7<sup>th</sup>, a Texas shrimper was arrested for pouring fake oil on herself during a U.S. Senate energy hearing. She said, "We are tired of the bailouts...I'm a commercial fisherman from the Gulf of Mexico, and we're tired of being dumped on!" This shrimper was engaged in *Delivering Symbolic Objects*, # 21 on the list.<sup>1</sup>

For as long as there has been violence, war and oppression there has also been Nonviolent Action waged to prevent or respond to these forces. These

3 examples are all from June 2010, but in every time and every place there have been those who have used Nonviolent Action as a strategy for social change. In 1929, women in Nigeria organized themselves against yet another proposed tax by the British colonial government. They engaged in two methods of Nonviolent Action by "sitting" on the Chief's residence. "Sitting" involved the women descending on the house of the chief to sing and dance (# 37, *Singing*) outside the residence until the chief resigned his position (# 31, *Haunting Officials*), which he did after a few days of continual singing outside his home, and later the decision was made to not implement the tax. In 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. Egypt, people refused to pay their taxes because it went towards war-making. *Revenue Refusal* is # 90 on the list of *Methods* as a form of economic and political non-cooperation. War Tax Resistance has been around as long as taxes have been levied, and carried out in Africa, Australia, Europe, the Americas, and Asia.

Have you found yourself participating in a protest wondering if there's any point to it? Have you learned of a group's call for a boycott and asked yourself if it will bring any results? Have you engaged in civil disobedience and questioned the effectiveness of it? Scholars and researchers in the fields of Peace Studies and International Conflict Resolution, have been systemically studying Nonviolent Action movements throughout history and have documented situations where people from across the globe have implemented the methods and theories of nonviolence. The 1973 work of Gene Sharp, "The Politics of Nonviolent Action", which includes the list of *198 Methods*, is an invaluable resource to learn about the breadth of Nonviolent Action methods and even more importantly how it is to be carried out. His research, which classifies the different methods into 3 categories – *Nonviolent Protest & Persuasion*, *Non-cooperation* and *Intervention*, helps to answer the question about what is most effective. It's not as clear-cut as looking at the effectiveness of say, legal protest vs. civil disobedience vs. letter-writing. Rather it is helpful to look at these methods on a spectrum of how much pressure to apply on a situation or power broker based on the power analysis of the opponent and one's own sources of power. The key is having these methods a part of a larger strategy. When they are, people engaging in Nonviolent Action have brought down dictators, blocked coups d'état, defended against foreign invasions, expelled foreign occupation, provided an alternative to violence in extreme ethnic conflicts, challenged unjust social and economic systems, among others.<sup>1</sup>

There is so much hope, which comes in part from the vast histories of people who have engaged in nonviolent action around the world, the scholarly research that has analyzed their actions and the grassroots practitioners who have implemented the strategies. There are many people to look to for practical, real-life guidance when attempting to live out Jesus' call for a third way, which does not resort to violence nor to passivity, in dealing with our conflicts with neighbors and enemies alike.

If you want to learn more about what goes into Nonviolent Action, Shalom House has the book series "The Politics of Nonviolent Action" that you may gladly borrow. Or visit the Albert Einstein Institution, a nonprofit organization advancing the study and use of strategic nonviolent action in conflicts throughout the world, at <http://www.aeinstein.org/>.