

First published 7/11/2026 Loveland Reporter-Herald

Power Doesn't Corrupt—Fear Does

“It is not power that corrupts but fear. Fear of losing power corrupts those who wield it.” This insight by Aung San Suu Kyi exposes a deeper truth about human nature and the misuse of authority. Power itself is not inherently evil. It can be used to serve, to protect, and to advance what is good. What distorts it is the motive behind it—particularly the fear of losing it.

Fear has a way of reshaping priorities. It clouds judgment and justifies actions that would otherwise be recognized as unethical, even immoral. When individuals or institutions become preoccupied with preserving influence, reputation, or control, they often begin to compromise principles they once claimed to uphold. The issue is no longer stewardship of responsibility, but preservation of self.

This pattern is not confined to politics, though it is often most visible there. Leaders may manipulate narratives, silence opposition, or divide communities—not always out of initial malice, but out of fear of losing position. The same dynamic appears within organizations, including nonprofits and ministries, where authority can be guarded rather than shared and accountability resisted rather than embraced. Even in everyday relationships, fear of loss can lead to control, dishonesty, and damaging self-protective behavior.

Scripture speaks directly to this condition of the heart. Proverbs 29:25 warns, “The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe.” Fear ensnares because it shifts our focus from God to people, and from truth to approval. What begins as concern over outcomes can quickly become a pattern of compromise.

At its core, this fear reveals a deeper issue: self-centeredness. James 3:16 states, “For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.” When preserving status or influence becomes the priority, integrity is often the casualty. Fear-driven leadership is ultimately self-driven leadership.

By contrast, Scripture presents a radically different model. Jesus redefined power not as control, but as service: “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant” (Mark 10:43). In this framework, authority is not something to grasp tightly, but something to steward faithfully. It is not secured through fear but exercised through humility.

This distinction leads to a necessary personal question: What governs our decisions—fear or faith? For those who claim to follow Christ, the answer should be clear. The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 4:1–2, “We instructed you how to live in order to please God... Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.” The Christian life

is not centered on maintaining influence or gaining approval, but on living in a way that honors God. Rather than a fixation on self, it is a life increasingly shaped by concern for others and transformed into the likeness of Christ.

When the desire to please others becomes primary, we risk drifting into patterns indistinguishable from those without a relationship with Christ. Jesus challenged this directly: “How can you believe since you accept glory from one another but do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?” (John 5:44). The pursuit of human approval, especially when tied to power, subtly displaces devotion to God. Too many who profess Christ settle for passive belief without surrendered living, mistaking profession for discipleship and comfort for obedience.

Biblical ethics redirect our motivation to gratitude. We seek to please God not to earn His favor, but because of what He has already done for us through Christ—what we could never accomplish on our own. “He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him” (2 Corinthians 5:15). This truth reorients both our identity and our conduct.

A life anchored in Christ is freed from the fear of losing position or approval. It does not grasp for control or compromise under pressure. Instead, it is marked by integrity, humility, and courage. In a culture where fear often drives the pursuit and protection of power, such a life stands in sharp contrast.

In the end, the issue is not power, but trust—because where fear rules, corruption follows, but where trust in God leads, integrity stands.

Don Overcash is a business consultant, coach, speaker, and the author of *Being Salt and Light; Bringing Truth and Hope to a Lost Culture.*

Contact: Don.Overcash@outlook.com