

***Making Room for Leadership: Power, Space and Influence*, MaryKate Morse
(InterVarsity Press, 2008)**

Power is such an important concept when it comes to leadership, and yet it is so often overlooked. I am very aware that for women in particular, the dynamics of power in leadership are important, yet I've found very few books which address it. This is one exception.

The author, who brings expertise and insight from her roles as professor of leadership at a seminary in Oregon, as a Friends pastor who has planted two churches and as a mentor and spiritual director, focuses her study of power in leadership on body language: as the book's subtitle suggests, on how leaders lead with their body as well as their voice and their decisions, how leaders take up space in a room and use their body in group settings.

The book's Introduction takes us to a 'sandbox', (this side of the pond, a 'sandpit'), where children are playing. There are no instructions, children just play. But some children dominate the space, others stay in one corner and eventually get pushed out. This, the author contends, is like life. We are all playing in a sandbox – but some people seem to take up more space than others. Some people hardly get to play at all, because others are dominating the box.

The seed for the book was a phrase that Morse's counsellor repeated to her: 'There is no free space. Get out of the corner, into the game, and play.' This book is the result of what happened when she did step into leadership, but also of what she observed about how other leaders play. In my chapter in *Growing Women Leaders* on power and service, I tried to unpack some of the dilemmas which some leaders, especially women, feel, and I particularly resonated with what Morse writes here: 'When I felt powerless, I wondered if that was how to be a servant. Then when I felt powerful, I struggled with the impact I had on playing the game and whether or not that impact was Christlike.'

The book mixes together insights about aspects of power, a study of Jesus and how he used power, and stories of Christian leaders from a variety of contexts. Each chapter ends with a series of questions to stimulate thought and discussion.

The first chapter unpacks the subject of power, and that of leadership, and the author notes that while leadership is traditionally measured by character traits or leadership outcomes, this leads churches and organisations to focus on the scoreboard rather than on the way the game is played. Subsequent chapters explore the ethics of power, how leaders take up space, power in presence, visual marks of presence, how to use power well, and some practical strategies for interacting and using power well in a group context.

While the book is a fascinating mixture of study of Jesus, research findings, observations of other leaders, personal stories, and analysis of power dynamics, I did not always find it an easy book to follow – but then I think I am quite an analytical person. I was fascinated that one of the author's stories about good use of power is about Leighton Ford, the leader who established the Arrow Leadership Programme in North America. And what I loved were the author's insights, which helped me to reflect on some of the power dynamics in my own organisation and in other contexts where I've been a leader.

This book is addressed to, and should be read by, both male and female leaders in the Church. But women, who too often experience bad use of power, may well find it full of insight in how to 'get out of the corner and into the game', but to use their power in a God-honouring way.