

## EMBRACE WISDOM and LOVE

Week #2 of a 6-Week Series, "Embrace Your Power"

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So, how many people know that if you could start your life over again, and live up to this moment, that you could do more, achieve more, have more, and be more than you currently are? And how many people know that, as many times as you might have failed or fallen short of your goals ... or messed up or made mistakes ... or had your heart broken ... or really struggled or are still struggling right now ... that you still know that there is more life, there is more hope, there's more love, more blessings and possibilities and happiness for you?

And my question is: How do you know that? [Congregants laugh] How do you know that? And my answer is: It's because it is born in us. It has always been in us. It will always be in us. Our souls know the words from Luke 17:24 that says, "*The kingdom of God is within you.*" That God's Spirit dwells in you,; that you live in a field of infinite possibility. That you have access to the unlimited abundance of the universe. That is the truth.

And you know, while it is true for us, I think sometimes we are afraid to accept it and own that great truth of our potential and spiritual power. Remember that quote by Marianne Williamson that said our greatest fear is our light, not our darkness; our fear that we are brilliant and beautiful and talented.

And so, this morning we're going to look at our series that we just began called "Embrace Your Power," because I don't think we always do. And so, what we're doing is looking at the 12 spiritual attributes that Charles Fillmore said are the 12 God-given spiritual powers that make up the fullness of the Christ potential that Jesus fully demonstrated in his life ... and that are in potential in us and are being called from within us to express more fully.

And the thing that allowed Jesus to be able to express what was in him is because he knew who he was. In the book of Matthew, Chapter 16, Verse 13-16, Jesus is asking his disciples who people say he was. Because it says:

*"Who do people say that I, the Son of man, am?"*

*And they said, "Some say that you are John the Baptist; and some say Elijah; and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets."*

*And he said to them, "But who do you say I am?"*

*And Simon Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God."*

Jesus knew he was the Christ, the Son of the Living God. He knew that was true for him, and he knew that it is true for us: that we are all the Christ, the Son or daughter of the Living God.

You know, Jesus said, "*I am the light of the world.*" He knew that was true for him and for all of us when he said, "*You are the light of the world.*" And finally, in John 14:12, he said, "*You shall do the things that I have done, and even greater things than these shall you do.*" So Jesus clearly is emphasizing that the same Christ power and potential that was in him is in us.

You know, Charles Fillmore said the way for us to demonstrate the fullness of the Christ potential is to understand, embody and express these 12 Christ qualities. And that is what we are doing in this series. We are learning how to more fully express these 12 Christ qualities.

Last week we began with **FAITH** and **STRENGTH**. Jesus spoke the most on faith of all these 12 spiritual powers, because faith is the foundation of life. Faith is the foundation of all of these spiritual powers and our Christ potential.

In the Book of James, he said, *"Faith without works is dead."* And so that means that we need to work our faith. We need to grow our faith like a mustard seed and we must walk our faith and live in faith. And faith is knowing that there is more hope, healing, possibilities beyond whatever may be ahead of us.

And the second power we looked at is power of strength. And spiritual strength is what gives us mental strength, and what gives us emotional strength. The strength I'm talking about is the ability to endure: to be steadfast; to persevere; to be persistent, resilient and patient.

So, when you think about it: faith believes that we've got what it takes and there's enough for us to get through. And strength is the thing that gives us the determination to keep on keeping on; keep hanging on until we make it through and fulfill our desires.

And so, today we're going to talk about **THE SPIRITUAL POWERS OF WISDOM AND LOVE.**

And so: spiritual wisdom. And so **WISDOM** -- and you could say good judgment -- is an important part of life. And it is a powerful spiritual practice. And we all want wisdom, because we all want to make good decisions. You know, we all want to be able to discern what is best for us and discern what is good and not good for us.

We seek wisdom because we know that life is really a product and the result of our choices. So, we want to make wise choices. How many people here have ever made some bad choices in relationships? In career? Or investing your money? Anybody ever make a bad one or two? And anybody ever make a really dumb one to the point that you even said to yourself, *"What was I thinking?!? How could I be so stupid?!?"* [Congregants laugh]

**So wisdom is the ability to judge; the ability to evaluate, appraise, and to appropriately apply what is known so that it will lead us to the very best outcome.**

You know, wisdom and good judgment is not only for big things. You know, it's not, *"Oh, I really need this big decision, I need some wisdom on it."* There is wisdom and judgment going on every day of our lives, numerous and countless times. From the moment we wake up, we have to make judgments and evaluations of how we're going to live our lives.

We wake up in the morning; first thing we decide is, *"Am I going to get out of bed today?"* [Congregants laugh] Or, *"What shall I eat? What shall I wear?"* You know, *"Will I even have time for breakfast if I want to get to work on time?"*

You know, it takes some wisdom and discernment to say, *"How am I going to spend my time?"* *"What are my priorities?"* *"How am I going to spend my money?"* *"Who am I going to spend my time with?"* *"What are the things I'm going to say and not say?"* *"What are the things I'm going to do and not do?"*

Now, wisdom, as a spiritual quality -- when it's not developed fully or used fully -- manifests itself in not in our greatest ways. And the first way is indecisiveness. How many people have ever been indecisive? I used to be indecisive, but I'm not sure anymore. [Congregants laugh]

And you know what is at the root of that? It's because we're afraid to make decisions. Sometimes we don't want to make a bad decision, so sometimes we think we don't want to make any decisions. Anybody ever second-guess yourself? Or be a little washy? Wishy washy? *"Maybe I'll do this; no, no, I'll do that."* And so, it leads to a place where sometimes we can't tell what's our best. We can't make a

decision of knowing what is the best way to go for our lives. And we get into this pattern of making poor choices over and over again, to the point that we say things like, "Why is this happening to me again?"

And another aspect of an undeveloped level of good judgment and wisdom is when we don't have standards; when we don't have priorities; when we don't have boundaries.

And so, wisdom -- when it is overdeveloped -- looks like being judgmental. And we human beings can be very judgmental with each other. We judge each other by how we dress. We judge each other by our careers or our jobs or our life choices. "Can you believe she married him? She hardly knows him!" [Congregants laugh] "Their marriage has got no chance!"

We've got all kinds of things and ways that we judge other people to the point of being discriminatory and sexist and racist when it's overdeveloped.

And also in ways that we judge ourselves. We put ourselves down and judge ourselves, because we've made a certain mistake a certain number of times, or call ourselves a loser, or think that we aren't good enough or feel shame for who we are.

You know, not judging is not an easy thing, because the faculty of judgment in us helps us evaluate things for us to know how to make the best choices and the best decisions -- how to stay safe. But sometimes we cross the line in being judgmental when we start harshly saying and labeling people in certain ways -- others and ourselves.

You know, "He is such a low-life scumbag: no class, no integrity; dirty so-and-so!"

And you think "Oh, isn't a little bit a judgment?"

It's like "No, they're just the facts; I'm just stating what's true!" [Congregants laugh]

We justify our judgment! And you know how not easy it is? Let me tell you how not easy it is. Jesus even had some struggle with this! In Matthew 7, Verse 1, Jesus said, "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. But if you judge, you will be judged." And in the next line, he said the Sadducees and Pharisees -- he called them vipers and hypocrites. [Congregants laugh] Is it just me, or is calling them hypocrites a little judgment? [Congregants laugh] I don't know. Just giving you the facts! [Congregants laugh]

How about when Jesus cursed the fig tree because it didn't produce fruit? He cursed it; it withered and died. I mean, was he just hangry and cranky? [Congregants laugh] So was he a little judgmental or did he just need a Snickers? [Congregants laugh] I don't know. I'll leave that up to you.

Jesus said, "Do not judge by appearance, but judge by righteous judgment." And when it comes to judging, there are two ways we can judge: by what we see, and by our sense perception; by our own personal experience; by our personal beliefs; or advice we get from others. And then the second way is to go deeper to that Divine Wisdom: to that deeper Spiritual Intelligence of that all-knowingness that is within us and all around us that is always trying to lead us and guide us to the highest and best.

### **Here are three ways that we can improve our faculty of wisdom:**

#### **The first one is TRUST.**

Here's what Dan Millman, who wrote the book, *Way of the Peaceful Warrior*, said. He said, "Your subconscious holds the key to a treasure house of intuitive wisdom, clear insight, and untapped power. All you have to do is look, listen, trust, pay attention to dreams, feelings, and instincts. Are you willing to trust that there's a Higher Intelligence? That there's a Higher Power: a Divine Wisdom available to you 24/7? And are you willing to trust and rely on it and turn to it?"

To trust your gut; trust your instinct; trust your body; trust that wisdom is there. And trust it enough to tap into it and utilize it.

So the first thing is trust. **The second one is ASK.**

In the Book of James, Chapter 1, it says, *"If any of you lacks wisdom, ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."*

To ask is to direct the Spiritual Intelligence and the Divine Wisdom to help you in any particular area. To ask and you shall receive. And to ask ourselves a question in an area of a life we might be struggling in: *"So what is the highest and best in this situation? Is it time for me to let go? Is it time for me to hang on? Is this a good business deal? Is this the right relationship? Is this the ideal home for me or job for me?"*

Whatever it is that you need guidance in, ask God! Trust that the intelligence and wisdom is there and be willing to ask! Open a channel for that wisdom to flow in and through and to you in your life.

**And the third one is to LISTEN.**

Because after you ask, you've just got to listen. To allow the wisdom to come forth. To listen to the still small voice of God. To listen to that gut feeling. To listen and just pay attention to the signs and the signals that the universe will provide you. And the more we do it, the easier we will be able to notice the signals and read them and know what is for our highest and best.

Buddha said, *"Know well what leads you forward and what holds you back, and choose the path of wisdom."*

See, the more we tune into the Divine Wisdom -- the more we trust, ask, and listen -- the more we will know what leads us forward. The more we will know what holds us back. And we will make better decisions.

The question is: Are we willing to set our intention and to practice with consistency, trusting, asking, and listening to the divine wisdom within us to allow it to lead us.

You know, one of the prayers I love: I love the Serenity Prayer. Let me read it to you: *"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."* All of this hinges on the wisdom to know the difference.

And so the question is: Are we willing to open our lives and rely on this intelligence and wisdom within us to lead us and guide us in our lives?

*"I am wise and discerning. I trust God's wisdom in all situations."*

Together: [with congregation:] *"I am wise and discerning. I trust God's wisdom in all situations."*

Take a deep breath and now say that again half voice: [with congregants]: *"I am wise and discerning. I trust God's wisdom in all situations."* Take another breath.

And so, the third Christ quality to fully express the Christ potential in us is the spiritual quality of wisdom.

The next one we'll look at, the fourth, is **DIVINE LOVE.**

You know, love is the greatest commandment: to love God with all your heart, to love others as you love yourself. In Corinthians it says, *"Faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love."* In the Book of John, we are told that God is love.

And when you think about it, love is the greatest and most powerful energy in the universe. And as much as we want love -- and need and desire love, and kind of love love -- sometimes we don't know what love is.

You know, sometimes we misuse love in so many ways. Like, *"I love going to the movies."* You know, *"I love my job."* *"I love my house."* You know, *"I love Black Forest cake."* [Congregants laugh] *"I love the Kansas City Chiefs."* *"I love my air fryer."* *"I love the smell of coffee in the morning."* *"I love my hometown."* *"I love Unity."* You know, *"I love my mom."* *"I love my partner."* *"I love myself."*

We've got all kinds of things that we love ... but tell me: How would you define love? How would you capture what this amazing thing -- this greatest commandment, the thing we desire more than anything else in life? How would you define love? What is love?

In the book, *Power Up*, talking about the 12 powers, this is how it's defined: *"Love is the ability to feel affection for, desire, attract oneself to, harmonize, and unify."*

But the Greeks defined three areas of love: *eros* love, romantic love; *philia*, brotherly love; and *agape*, unconditional love, divine love.

I didn't like any of those definitions, so I made up my own. [Congregants laugh] Because really, trying to capture what is the definition of love, here's what I think it is. Love is caring for; cherishing; valuing; appreciating; supporting; seeing; respecting; and listening to others in all of the various forms of relationship that we can have ... AND allowing ourselves to be cared for; cherished; appreciated; supported; seen; respected; and heard in all the different relationships in our lives.

Love is this incredible faculty we have, but when it's underdeveloped, it shows up in our lives ... you know what it shows up as? Not hate, but indifference. When we don't feel connected or close or affection to anyone, including ourselves.

When love is overdeveloped, we love indiscriminately, inappropriately, lustfully, and it can manifest itself as neediness, and even co-dependence.

How do you define love? It's not easy to define love, but there is no question how important love is; how powerful love is. And the truth and the fact is: that we all want love. We are all seeking and desiring love.

So, I want you to think about the amount of love in your life or a particular relationship in your life and ask yourself the question: Have you truly opened your heart to the deepest levels of love that you could feel and express and share in your life or in that relationship? In what area in your life would you like to feel and experience more love? And what area or relationship in your life would you be willing to commit yourself to express more love?

**Here are three ways I think we can expand that love faculty -- that Christ quality of love -- in us:** and it is clean heart; open heart; compassionate heart.

**A clean heart is vital** because, when we hold on to bitterness or regret or guilt or any of those negative emotions, we are blocking the flow and our ability to feel or express love.

Psalm 51 -- I've said it many times and it's a prayer we should probably use every day -- *"Create in me a clean heart, O Lord, and renew a right spirit within me."* I bet if we ask ourselves the question every single day, *"What do I need to let go or what am I holding on to every day?"*, we would probably have something that we're holding on to that we need to let go.

It's an important spiritual practice -- a life practice and absolutely vital if you want to expand and increase the amount of love. Because every day, I think we pick up little disappointments, little hurts,

little tweaks here and there. *"Somebody looked at me funny or said something,"* and we pick up these things and we go to bed and they're still in us; in our hearts.

I mean, I think at the end of the night, every one of us should pray, *"Create in me a clean heart, O Lord. What is it I need to forgive? What is it do I need to let go to keep my heart, you know, open and at peace?"*

So, a clean heart. You know, letting go of anything you know that's there -- or even the things you don't know that's there. To let it go and keep it clean. Keep love flowing.

### **The second one is to open your heart.**

How many people have ever had someone who got you so angry that you absolutely shut down and closed your heart off to them? Anybody ever do that? Okay. Five of us; this is perfect! [Congregants laugh] I wrote this for five people; it worked out so well!

I think we all have that. Think about somebody right now in your life that you just don't see eye-to-eye with; they irritate you. You've got conflict and upset. Take a deep breath: see them in your mind's eye and feel what it feels like when you shut your heart down. Feel what it feels like when you close your heart off. And now, still in that place, take a deep breath, and consciously open your heart. Another deep breath; open your heart even more. One more time: deep breath and open your heart. And feel the love of God. Just let God's love wash over you -- cleansing, renewing and refreshing -- and fully opening your heart to feel that Divine Love. To feel that love that you feel for the people in your life. Feel the love that you feel for yourself. Feel the love for the gift of being alive.

It's amazing how powerful life can be -- how peaceful and joyful it can be -- by just opening our hearts. Deep breath one more time: open into your heart space.

You know, one of the things is: whoever that person is that might rub you the wrong way and that you have a tough time and want to close your heart to is -- they're a child of God just like us. It's a person who screws up and messes up just like us. It's a person who wants to be happy just like us. A person who has good in them Just like us. It's a person who deserves another chance to learn and improve and be a better version of themselves.

### **I think it's an important thing to clear our heart; clean our heart; open our heart; and also have a compassionate heart.**

You know, I was taking some meditation -- doing some meditation work -- at the Buddhist temple and we did compassion meditation. And their definition of compassion is the desire for the well-being of all living things without exception. Now, I unfortunately ... I had a few exceptions. [Congregants laugh] So I had some work to do.

And it's really, really true. You know Buddha says that pursuing compassion makes us happier than pursuing happiness. Because to pursue compassion: compassion expands our hearts; it expands our minds; it expands our awareness; it expands our level of joy; it expands our level of happiness. Because we are fully engaged in life when we are thinking about others.

And, yes, sometimes it's hard for someone that's hurt us in some way to keep our hearts open. But then also to have compassion for them.

I wasn't going to share this, but my dad's dad did not treat my dad very well. And so, I didn't really know him, but I just heard stories of him. And I hated him. And I hated him for a long time. Never met the man, and I carried this hate, thinking, *"He's not my grandfather; he's not my family."* Because he hurt my dad so badly. And in these compassionate things that I did at the Buddhist center, they ran through

some of these things. That he's a child of God; he made mistakes, and people hurt him. Not to excuse anything that that he did, but just have some compassion that he might have gone through some stuff that I don't know about, you know. And I'm, years later, carrying on this ridiculous resentment and hate towards him. And it was such a relief and so healing for me; 20 years plus after the guy died that I finally found relief and peace through compassion.

It is a powerful, powerful healer that does us good, but does the world good. It is amazing how liberating it is! Love is a powerful healer and we just ... And to expand and grow more love in all areas of our lives, we need a clean heart, an open heart, and especially a compassionate heart.

And a compassionate heart for ourselves, too. We need to have compassion for ourselves; to know we're doing our best. We could be judgy, harsh and brutal on ourselves! And sometimes we just need to be more gentle and compassionate; that we are, indeed, trying our best.

The interesting thing is: love and wisdom need each other. Love needs wisdom and good judgment, because love is not always about saying "Yes"; sometimes it's about saying "No." Love is not always about hanging on; sometimes love is about letting go. Love is not always about giving in; sometimes it's about standing firm. Love is not always about doing something for someone; sometimes it is not doing for them.

*"I am loving, caring and responsive to the needs of others. I am God's love expressing in the world."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I am loving, caring and responsive, needs of others. I am God's love expressing in the world."*

Take a deep breath. And now half voice: [with congregants] *"I am loving, caring and responsive to the needs of others. I am God's love expressing in the world."*

Little joke about wisdom and judgement and love:

*A doctor, a lawyer, and a little boy, and a priest are out on a Sunday flight in a private plane. Suddenly the plane is giving engine trouble. In spite of all the efforts of the pilot, the plane starts going down. And the pilot grabs a parachute and yells to the passengers, "Grab a parachute and jump out."*

*Unfortunately, there were only three parachutes left for the four remaining on the flight. The doctor grabs a parachute and says, "I am a doctor. I save lives. I must live." And he grabs a parachute and jumps out.*

*Then the lawyer says, "I am a lawyer. I am one of the smartest people in the world. We cannot deprive people of my wisdom and knowledge. I deserve to live." And he grabs a parachute and jumps out.*

*And then the priest looks at the little boy and says, "My son, I've lived a long and good life. I have felt the love of God and the blessings of God. You know, you're young. You've got your whole life. Why don't you take this parachute and live in peace?"*

*And the little boy hands the parachute back to the priest and says, "Not to worry, Father. The smartest man in the world just jumped out with my backpack." [Congregants laugh] All right. Okay.*

If we want a better life, we need to remember and own the truth of who we are: that we are a child of God and we are powerful spiritual beings, and for us to embrace all of our power -- our Christ potential -- and fully live and demonstrate these 12 Christ qualities.

This week, let's focus on WISDOM by knowing that that intelligence is within us. And let's trust it, let's ask, and let us listen. And the power of LOVE: let us make sure we have a clean heart, an open heart, and a compassionate heart.

We can express the potential of the Christ in us by embracing divine wisdom and divine love.

God bless you all.

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