

2018 Wisdom

This summer we are exploring Charles Fillmore's concept that we are all endowed with 12 spiritual faculties or powers that are aspects of our divinity. Just as white light passing through a prism splits into a rainbow of colors, so Fillmore conceives that One Power, Divine Light, passing through the prism of our humanity expresses as a variety of faculties. We have talked about these faculties in past summers. And sometimes Fillmore's descriptions are a little confusing. We are not talking about physical muscles or organs that we can dissect and examine. We are talking about the kind of spiritual ideas that defy language and really are difficult to **prove**. Last week we talked about the power of power. Today we talk about wisdom—which Fillmore sometimes also calls spiritual understanding, although Understanding is a **different** power we aren't talking about until the end of the month. So what you get is sort of *my take* on what *I think* about what *Fillmore thinks*. Which leaves LOTS of room for questioning and something that may give you pause—**thinking for yourself!** Unity has no dogma or catma and so you get to believe what you want. Before we get too far off the leash, let's consider spiritual *wisdom*.

First off, wisdom is not intellectual knowledge or book smarts. It might be closer to common sense if that were more common. But it's not. Sometimes in Unity we refer to Wisdom as Judgment, which is not to be confused with judging. Rather Wisdom is **discerning**. Spiritual Wisdom, when it is engaged, can distinguish between material and spiritual—between our inner voices of ego and the voice of spiritual self. Wisdom **calls us** to stop and examine our thoughts to discern the source and value of the ideas milling about in our head. Wisdom sometimes asks the right question! Is this fake news? Is this true? Byron Katie asks “Is this true? Is this really true? What if it is not true?” On the one hand, it brings us to the realization that a whole lot of what we *believe is true* about our temporary world is temporary and changing. There is waaay more gray than black and white. Our duality thinking is much more comfortable with black and white. We tell ourselves that is the job of spiritual wisdom—to tell good from evil—right from wrong. Often we do not reflect that most of our thoughts are based on temporary evidence. We have developed a **bias** that says “This is always right” or “That is always wrong” and we do not examine our bias. We just act and react.

What happens when we begin to ask, “Is this true? Is this really true? What if this is not true?” Think about the last time you were certain you were right. What if what you believe is not true? Maybe some of it is not true. What then?

The traditional bible story about wisdom is King Solomon deciding the fate of an infant boy. What you might miss is how the story in 1 Kings, chapter 3 begins. “Two women who were prostitutes came to the king and stood before him.” How many of you immediately have a different view of whether or not these women are good mothers? Or even care about how the story turns out. We have bias based on the characterization of the women as prostitutes. Is your first thought true? Would you normally even question your first thought? In the story the two women live together and give birth three days apart. One woman rolls on her infant and smothers him. She takes the dead child and places him in the bed with the other woman and takes the living child for herself. We will call the woman who ends up with the living child Prostitute 1 and the other woman Prostitute 2. Prostitute 2 figures out the dead child is not really her baby and wants her son back but Prostitute 1 is adamant the living child is really her child. Solomon is a very young king but he asked God for wisdom and understanding in order to rule. Solomon calls for a sword and proposes to cut the baby in half, giving half to each woman. Prostitute 1 is okay with this but Prostitute 2 cries out to spare the child even if it means giving the whole baby to Prostitute 1. Solomon gives the baby to Prostitute 2. Without relying on deciding the superficial facts, Solomon discerned that the power of love could reveal what was true. True love could overpower the error thinking one of the women was demonstrating. Solomon also had to believe that a prostitute *could* be a loving mother which went against traditional intellect. Wisdom is *spiritual* truth.

Which brings us to the second way Wisdom can express through us—as the illumination of Truth. Capital T Truth is beyond the good and evil of duality. When we discover it, it is like that light bulb that goes on over our heads in the cartoons. Maybe that’s why we have the color yellow. The path to those spiritual Truths is to keep discerning our way through all the false illusions we call our material truth. It is not an easy process and our conditioning is to avoid it. Don’t dig. Rationalize what you believe and go on about your business without making waves. Spiritual Truth is too big, too vague, too difficult to pin our everyday lives on. Yet Truth is relentless and divine principle operates whether we like it or acknowledge it or practice alignment with it or NOT. It just keeps showing up. We can align or resist but divine principle is unchanging.

I didn't designate Solomon as the figure for wisdom. I picked Abraham Lincoln. And maybe you are wondering about the wisdom of **that!** Just as Solomon sought to divide a baby, Lincoln divided our country.

How could I pick a man who navigated our country through perhaps its most awful moments as an example of wisdom? Roughly 1,264,000 American soldiers have died in our country's wars--620,000 in the Civil War and 644,000 in **all other conflicts**. It was only as recently as the Vietnam War that the number of American deaths in foreign wars eclipsed the number who died in the Civil War. The picture I posted on Facebook looks pastoral. It is the stone bridge over Antietam Creek, the site of the bloodiest day in American history. 23,000 casualties in one day. Whether Union or Confederate, we lost 620,000 fathers, brothers, sons and husbands in the Civil War. So how can Lincoln's decisions be called wisdom?

Let me set the stage a bit. In the original Declaration of Independence we discussed last week, there is a recitation of the evils of King George the colonies were rebelling against. Thomas Jefferson proposed including the institution of slavery among the sins of George, even tho Jefferson owned slaves. Ultimately the slavery issue was taken out of the Declaration. Ironically England abolished slavery in 1833, some 32 years before the first shots were fired at Fort Sumter. But by then the course of our nation was set. The economy of the Southern states depended heavily on the practice of owning human beings and forcing labor from them. Southerners argued it was a state's right to allow slavery within the borders of its individual territory. In 1857 the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that Dred Scott, a slave born in a free state, had no continuing rights to freedom that could be enforced against any white man and that no black man could ever become a full citizen. If you want to know why it is important to look at who is on the Supreme Court, look to the Dred Scott case. Although the war was characterized as an issue of economics and state's rights, it was fundamentally about the institution of slavery. Was slavery a political issue? Yes. In 1858 it figured prominently in debates between Lincoln and Douglas as they vied for the Illinois Senate seat. In 1860 Lincoln was elected president and he was inaugurated on March 4, 1861. The Civil War began April 12.

Should we talk about politics in church? As to candidates or what party is aligning with what stance, I believe church should not endorse candidates. When I picked the context of American History for the 12 Powers I anticipated it could challenge our ideas of what is spiritual and what is political.

I am not one to back away from a challenge just because it is difficult. Discernment is not condemnation. Wisdom calls us to question our beliefs and seek the illumination of Truth in **all** areas of our lives. There are a myriad of issues arising right now that call us to look for spiritual Truth and question our bias. We cannot hide behind the veil of politics and ignore the issues. We cannot say “Oh that’s not spiritual.” Lincoln and many others discerned the Truth, big T, in our original words “All are created equal”. In Truth, one human cannot possess another human; one human is not less than another. It is not **just** a political issue. It is a spiritual issue. Once the Truth is illuminated, it is difficult to look away. Certainly not impossible. Certainly we can rationalize ego based ideas that are not in alignment with Truth. But the light remains.

The third expression of wisdom I selected is the ability to choose. It is not enough to know the truth but we must live it. That is our 5th principle in Unity. Wisdom is not always easy or simple or popular. Sometimes it doesn’t seem there is a *good* choice. Sometimes it seems the price of Truth is too great to bear. In 1858 Lincoln said a number of things that seem prophetic of his presidency, “Welcome, or unwelcome, agreeable, or disagreeable, whether this shall be an entire slave nation, is the issue before us.” “As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is no democracy.” “I believe this Government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved -- I do not expect the house to fall -- but I do expect it will cease to be divided.”

Was it unwise to abolish slavery? What other choice did Lincoln have? Truth was beaming through his soul even if it was a Truth which would prove unpopular with half the country. Which brings us to the human response we have to spiritual Truth. Sometimes we don’t like it! Let me take you back to the story of Solomon. From a big T perspective, pure Love will affirm and protect Life. Solomon relied on this. I have become cynical after many years working in juvenile justice and I can envision a scenario in which Prostitute 1, who did not get awarded the baby, snatches the baby and kills him anyway. If she can’t have the baby, no one can. Would *her reaction* make Solomon’s decision less wise? Would it change the spiritual wisdom of the Truth of Love?

Other countries managed to abolish slavery without a civil war. The response in this country to try to preserve slavery was driven by fear and greed. Just like most of the atrocities perpetrated by humans against other humans.

Tens of thousands of lives lost in battle after battle. 50,000 at Vicksburg; 51,000 at Gettysburg. On April 9th, 1865 General Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox Virginia. On April 14th, President Lincoln was assassinated. During his presidency, Lincoln lost a young son to typhoid fever and bore the weight of all the lives of sons and fathers lost on the fields of our home soil. Was it too great a price to pay to advance the Truth of equality and the sacred value of each human being?

The vision of Jesus, the vision of Lincoln, the vision of Martin Luther King Jr, indeed our vision, is an awakened world of peace, harmony and abundance. Peace and unity in a world where no one is a slave, no one is less than and no one is denied the abundance of good.

I wish I could say today that our country is not divided. I wish I could say that we have realized the words “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for **all**”. Appearances have still not caught up with the spiritual vision we hold. We continue to pay the price of trying to change the consciousness of a country conceived in the ideal of freedom with institutionalized oppression. Human rights for all continue to be fragile and sometimes illusory. I would say that no right or benefit in this country should be taken for granted today.

The profoundly positive thing I will say on this Sunday in 2018 is that in the deepest darkness, the illuminated Truth shines on. Let us not abandon our power of Wisdom to discern what may obscure the Truth and keep searching til Truth appears as the bright light in our consciousness. Then let us choose the Truth, in the face of obstacles and challenges; let us continue to choose what feels in alignment with spiritual Truth revealed through us. Don't depend on me to tell you what is True. You must search it out for yourself. Keep asking, “Is this true?” “What do I usually believe in this material world situation? What if it is not true?” Let us not pretend that an issue with politicians on various sides is not a **spiritual issue** for us to discern what is True and act upon our choice. I will not advocate political parties or specific candidates. I encourage you to listen to what goes on, question and participate in the governance of our country. I will advocate for love and compassion and peace and human dignity and the value of all people. I will advocate for each of us to act with authenticity, accountability and integrity. Be open and willing to admit errors and take action to change. When the light of Truth goes on in your conscious awareness, do not turn away. Use the light to guide your way and be a light in the darkness.

Let us affirm together: **Divine Wisdom expresses through me as the illumination of Truth; the ability to discern the highest consciousness; and the ability to choose. Amen**