

# Chill

On Sunday we continued to explore what “life in the Spirit” looks like, focusing on two more core characteristics of a Spirit-filled life – gentleness and patience.

1. Warm-up Question: What’s happened in the past week or so that has tested your patience? How did you respond?
2. On Sunday we returned to our Easter scripture passage, but explored it from a very different angle. As you’ll recall, Peter once swore that he would never deny Jesus even if he was the last man standing. But then, the night before the crucifixion, three times Peter did exactly what he swore he wouldn’t. Discouraged, Peter gave up on his discipleship path and returned to Galilee to resume the life of a fisherman. That’s where our Gospel passage picks up. Read John 21:1-17.
  - a. On Sunday, we focused on the two Greek words for love that appear in the dialogue between Jesus and Peter. *Agape* refers to the highest form of love, divine love, the kind of love Jesus showed on the cross. *Agape* is unconditional, sacrificial love. *Philo* is the kind of love you might have for a friend. It means to be fond of someone. Who is someone you *agape*? Who is someone you *philo*? What’s the difference to you?
  - b. When Jesus first asked Peter if he felt *agape* for him, what do you think Peter thought and felt?
  - c. When Peter responded that he felt *philo* for Jesus, what do you think Jesus thought and felt? (Have you ever asked someone if they loved you, only to hear them say that they’re “fond” of you? How did you feel?)
  - d. Why did Jesus ask Peter the exact same thing a second time?
  - e. The third time, Jesus changed his question, replacing *agape* with *philo*. What was his point?
3. By asking Peter to “feed his sheep,” Jesus was reinstating Peter to leadership in the Jesus Movement. He did this despite that fact that Peter admitted his love for Jesus was far from perfect and still needed to grow. By embracing Peter unconditionally despite his flaws, Jesus showed great patience and gentleness. For Peter, this was a pivotal moment – a tipping point – that lifted him from failure to become the preeminent leader in early Christianity. In his old age, Peter was arrested in Rome. Once again, he was asked if he was a follower of Jesus. This time he said yes and was crucified. The denier had become the martyr. His *philo* fondness for Jesus had grown into unconditional, sacrificial *agape*. As Psalm 18:35 says, “Your gentleness made me great.”
  - a. Suppose our Gospel story was different. Instead of gently restoring and encouraging Peter, suppose Jesus had confronted Peter for his hypocrisy and

unfaithfulness, and sternly rebuked him. How might Peter's story have been different? How might history have been different?

- b. If we want to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world, the Bible calls us to treat those around us the way Jesus treated Peter. Ephesians 4:1 says, "Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love." What do you hear that verse saying?
  - c. I Peter 3:15 says, "Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect." What do you hear that verse saying?
  - d. II Timothy 2:24 says, "The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting your opponents with gentleness." What do you hear that verse saying?
  - e. Legendary basketball coach John Wooden told a story about how his Dad's gentleness and patience with two plow horses shaped John's entire approach to life and coaching. Have you ever witnessed an act of great gentleness and patience? How did that affect you?
4. It's easy to tell us we're supposed to be gentle and patient, but much harder to figure out *how*? On Sunday we explored three *how-to* ideas. **First, insert circuit breaker; get in the habit of taking Sacred Pauses.** This idea comes from Proverbs 15:28, "The mind of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil." The goal is to train ourselves to pause momentarily when we get aggravated, rather than blurting out whatever comes to mind. What do you think of this idea? Do you practice it? Does it work? Why or why not?
  5. **Second, when you find yourself growing impatient with someone, try to imagine what it feels like to be them and how they got that way.** Jeff said, "Everybody's got something going on. We're all the way we are for a reason." Empathy, he suggested, is part of "loving our neighbor as ourselves." Tell us about someone who really irritates you. Then take a moment to describe what it might feel like to be them and how they may have gotten that way. Does engaging your empathetic imagination that way help? Why or why not?
  6. **Third, create space in your life to decompress.** When we're feeling gruff and impatient, it's usually because we're frazzled and stretched to our limit. We need regular quiet times of Sabbath rest to decompress and detoxify our souls, so we'll have the spiritual energy to be gentle and patient. Examples of quiet time decompression include music, yoga, jogging, meditating, taking a bubble bath, going to church, going for a walk, sitting in silence, prayer. What are your intentional restful practices? Do you get enough of them? If not, why not?
  7. Are there other ideas for how we can become more gentle and patient? What works for you?