

Content with Who You Are Not Where You Are

Air Dates: August 14 - 18, 2023

Day One

Are you content with who you are? It took years for me to accept and be contented with the way God created me. I had some wrong idea of what God wanted every woman to be and since I didn't seem to fit that mold, I kept trying to change but I just couldn't. After years of discontent with the way God created me, I finally understood that God had a good purpose for me and I have learned to appreciate and enjoy how God created me.

However, at the same time, I want to have a holy discontentment with *where I am* in my growth and maturity. Contentment and lack of contentment at the same time. Or you could say, accepting who I am but not settling for where I am.

Let's look at some specific areas where we often have difficulty accepting who we are, but where we must also never settle for less than we can be.

Your Body

The Bible says that each of us is fearfully and wonderfully made. So, you should accept and be contented with how God's hands made you because God doesn't make mistakes.

Do you look in the mirror and complain about your body, your face, your hair, your size? I want to encourage you to be contented with the body God has given you. I think of my dear friend, Fran, who was just barely five feet tall. All her life she was the shortest one. But you know, God used her size to enlarge her ministry. You see, because she was short and cute, her appearance was never threatening or intimidating to anyone. It made it easy for her to make friends—and she made friends with everybody. God used her personality and short stature to connect her with so many people, many who came to saving faith through Fran. It is not a mistake that she was a short person.

Accept the body and face and size and shape that God has given you. Accept, but don't settle. Keep that body running on all cylinders. Do everything you can to keep it healthy. Exercise as you know you should; get rid of some of those harmful eating habits. Be contented with your body, while at the same time never settling for anything less than the best it can be.

Day Two

Are you contented with the way God created you? I want to encourage you to be contented with who you are, but not where you are. Like the way God created you, but also strive to be everything God created you to be. An area where you may be discontented is your personality.

Your Personality

Each of us is unique; God doesn't make cookie-cutter Christians. Some of us are "people people;" some are "project people." Some are extroverts, others are introverts. There are many variations in the personalities God has created. Are you content with the personality God has given you?

I think of my friend, Afton, who thought for years that being an introvert was a huge liability. But thankfully she has learned to appreciate the way God created her and she recognizes the many strengths she has because she is quiet and reserved. She has written a book about it, *Living Connected: An Introvert's Guide to Friendship*. It's a very helpful book not only for introverts, but it helps those of us who are not introverts to appreciate and admire those who are.

My discontent with my personality was the opposite. I felt I was too up front, too take charge, too much of an extrovert, and for years I tried to be different—and of course, I failed. I remember thinking that sadly, I was stuck with who I was. It has taken me far too long to appreciate the personality God has given to me.

The challenge is to be contented with who you are but not where you are in your growth. Focus on the personality flaws that accompany your personality, pray about them, and ask God to help you get rid of the rough edges. For example, I don't have a natural gift of mercy, but that doesn't mean I shouldn't be a merciful person. It's a weakness I have acknowledged and prayed about, because I need to be merciful as God is merciful to me.

There is wonderful freedom in accepting who you are. Freedom from having to live up to other's expectations—or even your own. Freedom from having to be like others or compete with others.

Day Three

Have you accepted the way God has gifted you? The Bible clearly teaches us that each believer has been given definite and recognizable gifts or talents, which are resources to use in serving the Lord.

The things God has gifted you to do are the things that make you the happiest and bring the most satisfaction. You'll find great joy when you're functioning the way God created you to.

For example, if you have the gift of encouragement, your greatest joy will be to write notes, help someone out, listen to a heartache—lots of things which an encourager does so well. Using your God-given gifts and talents will bring you satisfaction, and you will do those things with enthusiasm and excellence.

But here's the other side of the coin: Never be satisfied with your gifts the way they are. Jesus taught us that when we use the gifts and talents he has given us, he will give us more. The Apostle Paul told young Timothy to “fan into a flame the gift of God in you,” and that's a good prayer you can pray. “Lord, help me do the very most with the gifts you've provided for me.”

So, accept the talents and gifts God has invested in you, and then set out to grow them as much as possible. Start where you are, with whatever you have to offer, and see where God can take it.

Your Intelligence

Are you contented with your intelligence? There's no doubt that God gave some people more brain power than others. Do you feel like you've been short-changed? Well, God needs some real smart brainy types, but he needs a lot of us ordinary types as well.

You may not have the highest IQ around, but you've got far more brain power than you realize. Don't settle for where you are intellectually; become a student and continually work at learning more—and you can improve your mind and knowledge whether in school or not, whether young or not-so-young. Good reading habits will make a huge difference. Be curious. Investigate and learn. There are lots of free on-line courses that you can use.

Day Four

I want to encourage you to be very contented with how God has created you. Appreciate God's creativity in you, and at the same time, never settle for staying where you are in your spiritual growth and maturity. Accept but don't settle.

Your Circumstances

Let me mention one more thing where we need to be contented, and that is with our circumstances. Paul wrote: "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances" (Philippians 4:11b). Have you learned that lesson yet? Just think about the freedom you and I would have if we could truly say with Paul: "I am content with my circumstances."

I think of a friend whom I admire greatly. She worked for Moody Radio in Chicago for many years, and is a gracious, lovely, talented woman. Due to a work-related accident, her husband was disabled most of their long-married life. When that happened, overnight her dreams of what her life would be like died, as she was forced to become a working woman and raise their children, while helping her disabled husband.

When I think of the years she did that, I marvel at her attitude. She never complained; she learned to be content in the midst of very difficult circumstances. And even when more family problems were poured on her head, she continued to trust God and accept what was coming her way.

Through all the years she never lost heart or gave up or ran away—all of which I would have been tempted to do. Instead, she contributed immensely to her job and improved herself and did the most anyone could do "under the circumstances," as we say. She comes to my mind as a woman who has accepted the circumstances of her life, and yet they have not beaten her into the ground. She has grown and contributed and made a beautiful life for herself.

Day Five

If you had to grade yourself on how contented you are, on a scale of one to ten, would you say you are very contented, a ten, or would your grade fall much lower on that scale?

Paul wrote to Timothy that "godliness with contentment is great gain." That's really what I want to communicate, that we all need to learn to be content with who we are, how God has created us, content with our bodies, our personalities, our gifting, and yes, even our circumstances. And when you are satisfied with who you are, if you then pursue godliness at the same time, you are in for great gain!

What kind of gain, you may ask. The gain of knowing you are growing more like Jesus; the gain of seeing how God is using you in the lives of others; the great gain of knowing that Jesus is pleased; you can hear his "Well done, good and faithful servant." That is the kind of gain that this world can never give you. No success or money or achievement will ever come close to the gain that, as a Christ-follower, you are walking worthy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter wrote that "*His (Jesus') divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness*" (2 Peter 1:3). When you and I make that the priority of our lives—to live godly lives for the glory of Jesus—and that desire is coupled with contentment, we will have great gain.

So often when our circumstances are out of sorts—we've got the wrong job or we live in the wrong place or we don't have enough money or we don't have good health or whatever—we are then tempted to waste our lives and squander our opportunities. If that's where you are, I urge you to pray daily that God will teach you to be content with your circumstances and help you accept what is coming your

way. But at the same time, don't settle for life in the doldrums just because the circumstances are rotten.

Accept but don't settle; be contented and discontented. You can hold both in balance; you can be more content and appreciative of who you are, just the way God made you, and where your life is right now. But it will also remind you not to let yourself off the hook but always strive to be all that you can be for the glory of Jesus Christ.