

Living in Your
*Master
Design*

Who Did God
Create You to Be?

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CHAPTER ONE

WHAT IS CONTENTED MISERY?

You know you're in contented misery when ...

We won't spend too much time on contented misery because, well, maybe we've already spent as much time there as we'll ever want to! But I want to make sure that I'm speaking to my counterparts out there who are in the same place I was and who will benefit the most from this book.

How do you know if you're living in contented misery? If you nod your head more than twice when you read some of the signs below, chances are you've experienced contented misery and its associated carnage.

- You are the king or queen of rationalization. "The job pays the bills." "I need the benefits." "I can stick it out for another few years." "My salary allows me to do the things I really like to do after working hours."

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- You wake up every Monday morning with the feeling of dread in the pit of your stomach. That same stomach starts to flutter with excitement at 5 p.m. every Friday.
- You often find yourself telling friends and family, and even yourself, “I’ve lost my passion; nothing excites me anymore.”
- You spend time daydreaming about what you’d do differently if you could do it all over again. Or, you spend way too much time fantasizing about what you’d do if you won the lottery. (Admit it: you’ve thought about it, right?)
- You feel like a bird trapped in a golden cage. The door is open, but you can’t fly out because your wings are clipped. I found myself recently using that word picture with a friend. It was a powerful moment of self-examination and hence a motivator for getting this book written (and hopefully many more).
- Your moments of happiness are short-lived. You have great times and fond memories but at the end of the day, there’s a nagging feeling of discontentment and emptiness.
- You’ve said on more than one occasion, “I’m happy but pure joy has eluded me.”
- Your neck and shoulders are wound so tight your massage therapist doesn’t ask you—but tells you—that you’re having frequent headaches. You can’t disagree.
- You flat out, undeniably feel like you’re stuck on the hamster wheel of life and can’t jump off.

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- You churn out tons of ideas for businesses, avocations or even hobbies, but you quickly forget them because you're drained from your day job and can't find the time or the energy to pursue anything.

Let's explore a few of these signs a little more.

Sign: Rationalization

I am qualified to talk about this one because I am a self-proclaimed master of rationalization. As you'll read in the next chapter, I have rationalized playing it safe for most of my working life. I have fallen on the sword of safety and pragmatism and have "sold out" my God-given gifts and talents in exchange for a soft and cuddly cocoon. The only problem with cocoons is that you get claustrophobic after, say, twenty years! What provides temporary comfort and safety can soon smother and snuff out your passions. If you find yourself coming up with reasons for staying in the comfort zone, ask yourself these questions:

- Do I really want to die saying I spent most of my life "sticking it out" as opposed to stepping out into what God designed and equipped me for?
- At the end of my life, do I want to say, "I wanted to do _____ [fill in the blank], but I was afraid to" or "but I never even tried"?

Friends, take it from me: you can rationalize your life away. Now, I'm not advocating doing something dumb, like quitting your job with nothing lined up to replace it. Trust me, I have been there and done that and don't want to do it again. What I am encouraging

you to do, though, is to reconnect with the gifts, talents, and passions that your Master Designer gave you so that you can use them for His glory and find the joy He intended for your life. How do you do that? We'll get there soon, but for now, let's talk a little more about contented misery.

Sign: Poor Health

Let's address that feeling of dread in the pit of your stomach, tight shoulders, and neck pain for a minute. As my doctor, massage, and physical therapy bills will attest, living in contented misery will take a toll on your health and your wallet. Why? When you constantly try to force a square peg into a round hole, that peg is eventually going to break. Trying to swim against the current for any length of time will exhaust you. If you keep swimming despite your body's warning signs, the current might sweep you right back to where you started, or worse, you might drown.

The bottom line is this: Using anything for a purpose other than what it was designed for will eventually wear it out—if it functions at all. Think about that. If you were designed to be an artist and have spent your life being an accountant (or vice versa, so we don't offend our accountant friends), how do you think that inner artist is going to respond after being pent up for thirty or forty years? I'll leave you to ponder that question for a moment.

Sign: Passion and Dream Amnesia

Have you gotten so caught up in the day-to-day that you've lost your passions and dreams? I can't tell you how many friends have told me this, and I know I've said it myself. Thank God that I cried out to Him and He lovingly reminded me that He created me to be

a writer. Since that revelation, I have found more joy and purpose living in the knowledge that what I'm doing right now (Yes, really, right now. I'm literally sitting and typing these words!) is living in His master design for me. And it has become my passion to help you find His master design for you. We'll do that in the Yearn section of the change model. I know I keep teasing you. It's only a few chapters away, I promise.

Sign: Idea Fever

Lastly, I want to say a word about ideas. Have you had brilliant ideas for making or inventing something, starting a business, or creating a piece of art? Have you ever looked at an image and been inspired to paint it or blow it out into something entirely new? Has an issue or cause gotten you so emotionally torqued that your heart raced, or your eyes welled up? That's your master design speaking to you. It's a part of your God-designed being whispering in your ear, saying, "Here I am. Please find me again!" The next time you get the urge to slough off those bursts of inspiration, stop yourself and listen to them. Grab a journal if you're so inclined and prayerfully ask God to show you if it's a gift, talent, or passion He wants you to reignite and use. God will show you if you ask Him.

That's enough about contented misery. In a few chapters you'll learn how to mitigate its effects on your life. But first, I'm going to share a little history about my own journey that has brought me to this place. Let's march on to the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

MY STORY

How I got where I am, and believe me, it's not pretty

Before I introduce the personal change model and some powerful tools for moving into your master design, I want to share my story with you because, honestly, that's where the change model was born. Before you start yawning and flipping through the pages to see how much "me talk" is in this chapter, I assure you this is not a full-length autobiography of my life or an exposé on my daddy issues. I'm only sharing those pieces that I believe led me to create the change model and fueled my passion to help others. I encourage you to read it. You might feel better about yourself when you do! So, here goes...

The College Days

I've been unhappy in my careers just about all my working life. Why, you ask? Maybe it was because I was one of those kids who never really knew what I wanted to be when I grew up. I was a jack-

of-all-trades and master of none. In other words, I was good at many things, but there was no dominant interest or drive. Case in point: I went into college as a nursing student and came out with an MBA in marketing. Go figure! Of course, there were factors that guided that decision. One of note—and an interesting note at that—was my summer and holiday employment at a bank. I loved that gig! We sat in cushy air-conditioned offices and entered data all day. Now, this was back in the early 80's so computers were cool to us twenty-something kiddos who thought a computer was a three-ton behemoth hidden away in some obscure back office.

I remember one day in particular. I walked by an office with a sign on the door that read, “Mitch Turell, Director, Training & Development.” My twenty-one-year-old feet stopped in their tracks as I stared at that title. “Hmmm...training and development,” I thought. “That sounds rather intriguing.” So, being the assertive, brassy, didn't-know-any-better fool that I was, I knocked on the door. No answer. To make a long story short, I found Mr. Turell's secretary (yes, they were called secretaries back then) and asked for an appointment to talk to Mr. Turell about his field. Mitch Turell and I connected, and afterwards, I said to myself, “I might like to do that one day.” It took about twenty years and many detours, but I did indeed end up in the field of training and development, now affectionately called learning and development, or even better, talent development.

Back to college and now a general business major (*general*—a great lure for a jack-of-all-trades), I was very active in student government. One of the perks of that involvement was participating in a leadership retreat every year. We'd go down to the university's

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Gulf Coast campus for a weekend of teambuilding and leadership exercises. Those sessions made a huge impression on me, and I recall saying to myself, “I might like to lead workshops and leadership seminars one day.” I was very excited about this possibility, until I hit my first roadblock: public speaking. I, like so many others, hated public speaking. This twenty-two-year-old young lady was petrified of speaking in front of a group. Behind that podium, parts of my body shook that I didn’t know could shake. I managed to stutter and stumble my way through the required speech class and passed it. However, I wonder at times if this fear contributed to my taking the scenic route to my destination.

Fast Forward to the Working Years

I’m *finally* out of college. (It really took only six years and, considering that I changed my major a couple of times and got a master’s degree, that’s not too bad!) First job: a sales representative for a major food manufacturer. I had grocery store accounts. Picture this: me, chasing down store managers and pitching my products. First, second, third pitches—here comes that shaking, scared-to-death young lady again. But after I got over the initial nerves, I got the hang of it and was so successful my competition tried to hire me. Then, I got bored. Really bored. And after a promised promotion that never came and a territory restructure that dashed my hopes of moving up, I moved on.

Second job: assistant to the director of sales support at a national pager company. (You know, pagers—those little digital devices that used to send an alert when someone was trying to reach us. Oh, so twentieth century!) Great job and great boss! I got to fly around the country and plan sales meetings and incentive trips, and

then I got to go on those incentive trips! But the great boss left, and I was left with a gargantuan project that involved many late nights on a computer. (I wasn't liking the computer so much anymore. It was no longer cool.) Again, I grew bored, and so with no opportunity for moving up, I moved on. Remember, I was still young at this point. Don't judge me!

Third job: sales analyst. This involved relocating to Atlanta, Georgia, where I left the world of pagers far behind and landed back in food manufacturing and computer work. This time I looked at marketing research and sales trends, built sales tools, and worked with sales managers. Great company, great people. The job was going well, and I even got my first promotion. I was a key account manager calling on grocery store *buyers* this time. No more chasing down managers in grocery stores. I excelled at what I did, but I was bored to tears. I was getting really good at rationalizing by this time, though (hmmm...sound familiar?). "It's a nice job. The people I work with are awesome. I love my clients." But there was something missing. Could it be that I'd forgotten the feeling I had when I saw the "Mitch Turell, Training & Development" sign? Had I forgotten the exhilaration I felt after the leadership workshops? It seems I had.

The Birth of Contented Misery

Good news! Well, sort of. The powers that be at our company decided to hire food brokers to sell our goods for us. Hence, there was no longer any need for us sales folks. The entire sales force was laid off. It gets better, or worse, depending on how you look at it. I was rehired as a category manager. This meant full-on computer work, and it was the pivotal point in my story. I was miserable. In

fact, my manager at the time coined that now familiar term just for me. He said I was in “contented misery.” Yes, I was miserable, but I was good at what I did—and getting good at feeling miserable.

The Rest of the Story (and Finally, the End of It)

Despite my growing discontentment, I was able to reinvent myself in several different roles. But I never made the leap into my destiny. It took over thirty years of trial and error to bring me to where I am now. There were more jobs. I went from category manager to corporate account manager at a major marketing research firm where I eventually ended up in Training and Development as a training manager. Ironic, isn't it? Perhaps I was wired all along to end up here, but due to my quest for the American dream, it took a lot of time and just as many life lessons for me to finally arrive. But that's okay. God wastes nothing. He even showed me through nineteen-plus years of being in the talent development field that I actually LOVE speaking in public and LOVE writing even more. God equips us with what we need to fulfill His purposes. And, He never gives up on us. I'm living proof.

What Does All This Mean?


And why did I just share my career life story with you? I want you to learn from my mistakes. I can't tell you how many times I've felt like a caged tiger bursting with ideas only to turn the lock even tighter. “I'm secure. I have a great job. The job allows me to do the things I like to do outside of work. It's safe. At least I know what to expect here.” Do these chants sound familiar, like contented misery sign number one: rationalization?

I want to relate to you and for you to be able to relate to me

and know that I'm not some MBA with a sterile theory that I derived in a controlled lab somewhere. No, I'm just a normal Joe (or Jayne) who's known all along that there's something better for me. I was created to do more than sit in a cubicle and do the same thing day in and day out. I'm not saying this is bad; we need consistent people. I'm saying this is not *my* calling. It's time for me to burst through the golden bars of comfort and make my contribution to the world, which is to walk alongside you as you discover your master design and, once you've made that discovery, to help you figure out how to start living in it.

Which brings us back to that C-word: change. There are so many models for change out there today, but I want to share with you the one that worked for me—the one I developed for my own life. I call it Yearn – Learn – Churn – Turn (YLCT).

Let's go!



The shell must break before the bird can fly.

Alfred Lord Tennyson