

YOU ARE MORE THAN THIS

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Rev. Dr. Michele Whittington

Tonight's question is: **WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?** Big? Right? Who do you think you are? That question is often asked with some sarcasm to it, right? "*Well, who do you think you are?*" [Congregation laughs] From someone who thinks we're being too big for our britches. Or being too much. [Snottily:] "*Who do you think you are?*"

But I'm not asking that question in that way tonight. I'm asking it honestly: Who do you think you are? And I don't think I would be wrong if I said most of us spend most of our time thinking about -- often, in fact, worrying about -- the outer trappings of who we are. Right? What we look like; what we wear; what we said; what we ... you know, what we're doing; how we're acting. "*How is the world responding to me?*" We're thinking about that. Am I wrong about that? Do you know somebody who does that? [Congregation laughs] Like, ten of your friends do that, but not you! Right? [Congregation laughs]

And we try to cajole and manipulate and maneuver all the pieces around and the parts of us around to make it all fit and make it all work. When we do that -- and we do it! -- I think we put the cart before the horse. So tonight I want us to put the cart and the horse back in proper order. But in order to do that, we need to unpack: take some things out of the cart. [Laughs]

So that's what we're going to do. We're going to take some things out of the cart. In fact, we're going to take seven things out of the cart so we can get it in its proper place and re-answer that question: Who do you think you are? Alright? Are you ready to do that. [Congregation: "Yes!"] Strap in; here we go.

The first one ... I'm actually reminded of two Sundays ago. Rev. Richard Rogers gave the talk. And I think he was quoting Mark Twain when he said that, "*If you have to eat a frog, don't look at it too long.*" [Congregation laughs] Yeah; I believe it was Mark Twain who said that. And I was reminded when he said that -- and it applies to our first item we're going to take out of our cart -- of Edwene Gaines, who was a wonderful prosperity teacher. I heard Edwene speak many, many times. I've gone to her former facility in Mentone, Alabama. Walked on fire with her; did a lot of stuff with her.

But she used to say -- and she was from the South, and I can't do a Southern accent very well, [mimics Southern accent] but I can try to do one a little bit! [Congregation laughs] Pretty good? Was that pretty good?

So she would say, [in Southern accent] "*Honey, if you've got to eat a jar of frogs, you'd best eat the big one first.*" [Congregation laughs] So we're going to eat the big one here first, then we'll look at the rest of them.

So I think the big one -- or at least for many people the big one -- that we need to take out of our cart is being defined by our past. Being defined by our personal history: what has happened to us; what we have done. Whether that was as a child, as an adult -- experiences that we've had. The gains; the losses; the ups; the downs; the tragedies; the triumphs. All of that. We can let that define who we think we are. And I want to propose -- and this is the big frog! -- that we let that go.

[Indignantly] "*What? What? My past has made me who I am!*"

And I agree with that. I absolutely agree that the past has made us who we are in this human experience. Has helped develop the personality that we have. It has brought us to this place. Absolutely yes! That is very true.

And I'm a believer in "Yes, and ..." not "or." [Laughs] Yes, that is true AND that is not who you are. **YOU ARE NOT YOUR PAST.** So the first thing we're going to invite you to take out of your cart is: identifying with your past. And are there things in your past that you know really are keeping you from being big? From living that full life that you came here to live?

When we're hanging on to our past, it's almost like we're trying to climb a ladder with a ton of bricks -- a bagful of bricks -- on our back. And we can't do it! Or, even if we do it, it's very difficult.

The Course in Miracles says, "To be born again is to let the past go." [Congregation murmurs] To be born again is to let the past go. Now, I'm not suggesting that this is easy. I'm not. And it takes some conscious, concerted, dedicated, deliberate, intentional -- what other word can I throw in there? -- effort. And it might be something that you need help with. And there's nothing wrong with getting help from a therapist; a ... I was going to say practitioner. That's from Religious Science. From a chaplain or a practitioner. A trusted friend. A mentor. Maybe you need some help with that. And that's okay.

But tonight -- at least tonight -- I want you to start thinking about the idea that: "*I am not my past; I am more than this.*"

So tonight for each of these seven things we're going to pull out of our cart, I'm going to have us say something. And here comes the first one. It's very simple; it goes like this: "*I am not my past; I am more than this.*"

Alright here we go!

[With congregation]: "*I am not past; I am more than this.*"

Breathe that in. [Breathes deeply in] Take it in. Now we're going to say it again. But before we do, I want you to just have in mind if there is something in your life that you can identify that is in your past that has been brought forward into the now that's holding you back. Because the attachment -- the hold -- on it is still pretty tight. If there is something, will you bring that to mind as you say that again.

And it goes: "*I am not my past; I am more than this.*"

Ready? Here we go!

[With congregation]: "*I am not my past; I am more than this.*"

Nice!

The second thing we're going to take out of our cart is: **WE ARE NOT OUR NAME OR IDENTITY.** Yeah, we have a name. And when somebody says, "*Hi! Who are you?*" What do we say? We say our name. That's what we say. And, of course, we are that. We have a name. But that's the key phrase: We have a name; we are not our name.

How many of you have had the pleasure -- the deep and wonderful pleasure -- of eating a Famous Amos chocolate chip cookie? Anybody not done that? Because I feel really sorry for you if you've never ever had one. I'm not sure that they're made anymore. They might be; I'm not sure. They were delicious chocolate chip cookies.

So Wally Amos was the baker who created these great cookies and then started selling them. He labeled them Famous Amos cookies. That was his brand. So even though most of you have had his cookies, you might not know his story. His story is -- and this is it in a nutshell. He wrote all about it. He's written many books, but one of his books was *The Man With No Name: Making Lemonade Out of Lemons* I believe is the full name of his book.

So he had this great, booming, thriving business. It grew very, very fast and was very, very profitable. And when that happens, oftentimes companies get bought out. His got bought out in a "leveraged buyout," whatever that means. I really don't know, but it was a leveraged buyout. And then he got ousted. [Clicks tongue loudly] Whew! That was good! [Laughs along with congregation] I didn't know I could do sound effects. But that was good!

Yeah. He was ousted and he legally could not use his name on any product. Because the company he was now no more a part of owned his name. He no longer owned his own name! And he went through this huge identity crisis: "*If I'm not my name, then who am I?*" And he went through a dark night of the soul that he writes about in this book, *The Man With No Name*. He went through this big identity crisis which took him on a spiritual journey. And he deepened into who he really was, which was not his name.

And he has, since then, written many, many beautiful New Thought positive books that have ... that are right in line with our teaching. Just perfectly in line with our teachings. And I love it, because he did come out later with a new company. And he had new cookies, and they were called the "No Name Cookies." [Laughs along with congregation]

So he finally got that he was not his name. So you are not your name.

So we're going to say: "*I am not my name; I am more than this.*"

Here we go!

[With congregation]: "*I am not my name; I am more than this.*"

YOU ARE NOT YOUR BODY. You are not your body. [Laughs] Okay; I heard that! I'm not even going to look over there, because I don't know who said it. But I heard someone say, "*Thank you, God!*" [Laughs along with congregation] I just came from over here; I'm not sure who it was! But I heard, "*Thank you, God!*" [Laughs] That was good.

C.S. Lewis once wrote, "*You don't have a soul; you are a soul and you have a body.*" Your soul has a body. We have a vehicle -- a vessel -- through which our soul is transported through this life experience.

But aren't we taught from a tiny, little, young age that it's so important? What we look like; what we don't look like; what we wear. I mean, the obsession with looks and weight and height and hair -- whether we have it or not. And I mean, all of that stuff. The beauty industry; the weight loss industry; the fashion industry; and plastic surgeons are all multi-billion-dollar businesses. Because we are obsessed with our bodies. And I have to -- as true confession -- I have contributed quite a bit of money to each one of those. [Congregation laughs] Each one.

So I'm preaching to myself here, as well. But the truth is: we are not our bodies. Our bodies, as the Bible says, are temples of the Living God. I love that! Our bodies are the temples of the Living God. And, yes; it is our responsibility for care for it; to respect and love it. But it is not who we are.

So again, we get to say -- and I'm going to say it first, because it's a little longer than the other ones: "*I respect my body. I care for my body. But I am not my body; I am more than this.*"

Can we do that one together?

[With congregation]: "*I respect my body. I care for my body. But I am not my body; I am more than this.*"

Take a breath. [Breathes in deeply]

So we're not our past. We're not our names. We're not our bodies.

WE ARE ALSO NOT OUR INTELLECT. Ooooooh. Uh oh. Oh! [Congregation laughs] Yeah, I should have said this earlier: notice which button gets pushed for you. I know somebody up here got pushed with the body button; somebody else over there got pushed with the intellect button.

Oftentimes we've been taught to believe that we've got to be smart. And so we go after knowledge. And there's nothing wrong with that! Again, I'm an "and" person. There's nothing wrong with seeking knowledge and gaining knowledge. That's fabulous! And it's not who we are.

How many of you know someone -- not yourself, of course! -- who is like a perpetual student. They're 60 years old and they're getting their fifth master's. And again, there's nothing wrong with that ... unless that is who you think you are.

I went back to college. When I graduated from high school, I went to junior college two years. Then I wanted to work and get out of the house and make it on my own. So I didn't finish college. And when I was 30, I decided I kind of needed to do that. I felt I needed to.

So I went back to school: went to Arizona State University. And I set ... And I don't know where this came from. This was long before I knew anything about metaphysics. Long before! I have no idea why; I needed, for myself ... Nobody said I had to do this; I did it! That if I didn't make straight A's [blows a raspberry], I was pretty much worthless. I had that view!

And so I enrolled -- full load. I didn't have to work; I was very fortunate not to have to work during that time. So I just took full loads so that I could get through as quickly as possible and get my degree. And I enrolled in classes that I needed for credit and others that I wanted to take. But if I took a class that I saw in the first couple weeks this was not going to go like I wanted ... For example: chemistry? Hmmm. Not me. [Congregation laughs] No; no; no; no; no. Not me; not me!

I had a requirement in that category that chemistry was under. I had to take something in that. And I thought, "*Oh, I'll do chemistry! How hard can chemistry be?*" Ha! [Congregation laughs] Yeah; yeah. Well, I knew an "A" was not going to be coming out of that class so, "*Bye bye!*" And I did that with more than one class, some of which actually might have benefitted me.

Chemistry? No; that was no. There was nothing in my future that would require chemistry class. But there were other classes that probably could have supported me. But a "B" was not acceptable to me. Now I don't know why I did that, but what it said to me was: If I got straight "As," I was worthwhile. I was valuable. It meant something.

Looking back ... Kind of crazy! I put myself through a lot of angst! But I did it. Anyway ... that's just an aside. [Laughs with congregation]

Who we are: we are not our minds. We are not our intellects.

When I went to ministerial school, one of the classes I took used a Wayne Dyer book called *Your Sacred Self*. Anybody read *Your Sacred Self*? Yeah! It's such a great book! It's such a ... It was published in 1996. I went back and looked at that today and went, "Yeah; yeah! I took that course that had that book when the book was new! That's how long ministerial school was for me! Actually a little earlier than that!

But nonetheless, in that book he talks so much about what we're not. And we're not our minds. Again, like, we have a name. We have a body. We have a mind. We have an intellect. But it is not who we are. And whether you get straight "As," or "Ds" or "Cs," it doesn't make one hoot of difference as to who you are.

So say with me, "*I am not my intellect.*"

[Congregation]: "*I am not my intellect.*"

"I am not my mind."

[Congregation:] *"I am not my mind."*

"I am more than this."

[Congregation]: *"I am more than this."*

Alright. Alright! Here's the fifth one: **YOU ARE NOT YOUR OCCUPATION**. Oooh, baby! You are not your occupation. That can be a big one for many people. You know, when people retire, how many people have we heard who retire and don't know what to do with themselves? They're so excited to retire and then they're lost! They don't know who they are without their job! Or even in the extreme that they die! Because they have no reason. Oooh! Gosh.

When I was a minister of a church -- Creative Living Fellowship; I see some of you out there! Aah. So little disclosure here. I stepped down from that church four years ago. But before that -- several years before I stepped down -- I went through some stuff and was seriously considering stepping down. Seriously considering. And I had some really powerful sessions with some colleagues. And one minister friend helped me see that I honestly did not know who I was if I wasn't the minister of that church.

I didn't realize that! I did not realize that my identity was so tied to being the minister of that church. And with the little digging that he and I did -- that he helped me do -- I came to that realization, Like, whoa, girl! Yeah. Like, this is not good!

So I didn't leave the church at that time, but I really did take a look at that enmeshment that I had with my own worth; my own value; my own identity with being the minister of that church. And I really did have to untangle that before I could leave clean and stand clean. And by the time I did make the decision to leave, I had done all that.

So is that a place for you? Are you identifying with taking your worth, your value, your thoughts of who you are by what you do? I love this saying, or this question: *"If you are what you do, then when you don't, who are you?"* [Laughs] Right?

So here's your statement: *"I am not my occupation; I am more than this."*

Here we go!

{With congregation}: *"I am not my occupation; I am more than this."*

Alright. Number six; we're getting down. Number six: **YOU ARE NOT YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS NOR YOUR FAILURES**. Ooof! Ooof! And we like our accomplishments, and we like to be known by that. Not so much our failures. We're not either of those things. Those are just things that happen in this life experience. But we're not that.

And I want to give you just some beautiful Biblical examples of people who did not define themselves by their failures. Okay? Or their limitations. So here we go: Abraham was too old -- way too old! -- to have a child. Come on, you guys. You know he was like 99 years old, right? Come on; come on! Unity is Bible-based; you should know this! Alright; here we go! And his wife, Sarah, was also way too old to have a child. Okay; since you might not know, she was 90 when she had a child!

So, some of you may recognize; some of you may not. But this is all Biblical truth!

Jacob was a liar. Joseph -- of the Old Testament -- was abused and abandoned. Moses had a stuttering problem. Samson was a womanizer. David was an adulterer and a murderer. Isaiah preached naked. Jonah ran from God. Job went bankrupt. Peter denied Jesus. The disciples fell asleep while praying. Oh, my gosh! These are horrible, horrible things! [Congregation laughs]

The Samaritan woman was divorced more than once. Shame; shame! Paul was too religious. And, for heaven's sake, Lazarus was dead! [Congregation laughs] And yet they did not identify with those failures or limitations.

So here we go! *"I am not my failures nor my accomplishments. I am more than this."*

[With congregation]: *"I am not my failures nor my accomplishments. I am more than this."*

Okay. One more that we have to unpack before we put in what we are, which I hope you already know ... in theory, at least! But we'll take it a little deeper tonight.

Finally -- and this is another biggie; this might be the second biggest one. I wanted to end with this one.

WE ARE NOT OUR RELATIONSHIPS. Ohhhh. [Laughs] Look; she's, like, looking at her husband: *"See?"*

[Congregation laughs] I see what happens out there!

We are not our relationships. Certainly, the love energy that we have in relationships; it's delicious and it's wonderful! And if you want to learn how to have a really, really yummy one, come to my class that's going start on February 5, by the way! Sunday, February 5; I would love to have you there!

But we are not our relationships. If we identify as someone's spouse and that's who we think we are, who are we if that spouse leaves? If we identify as a parent, who are we when our children grow up? Right? Who are we?

Hmm. My mother -- bless her precious soul -- lived for ... She did not know who she was beyond her two daughters, me being one of them. She did not know who she was. And that was very difficult for her, and it was very difficult for her two daughters. Because she kind of wanted to live our lives and control everything we did so that it fit her picture of what we should ... And, of course, neither one of my sister or I wanted to do that!

So I know what it's like to see someone, anyway, who identifies 100% -- their full identify is who their children are.

So my mom could be difficult. But she also had a great sense of humor. She had a delicious sense of humor. And one year for Christmas or a birthday, she gave my sweet husband, Lonnie, a doll. And I have it right here. [Pulls out and holds up doll] This is a mother-in-law doll. [Congregation laughs] And you might not be able to see the little pin, but it says, *"I told you so."* And her little finger is pointing like, *"Uh huh. I told you so!"*

So she gave this to him and she said, *"Lonnie, I know I can be frustrating at times. So if you ever get frustrated at me ..."* And how many of us have every gotten frustrated in a relationship? If you are not raising your hand, you're either sleeping or you're lying or you're thinking about something else.

[Congregation laughs] Because we all have frustrations in our relationships, right? And we really have them if we are identifying who we are because of them.

If we know who we are -- and stand in our own power and our own truth -- something goes amiss in the relationship, and it's like, *"Hmm. Things happen."* It's not so frustrating and irritating. We don't fall apart!

But my mom said, *"If you ever get frustrated with me, use this doll and take your frustrations out on this doll."* Because what you can do if you're frustrated, you can go, *"Dang it!"* [Rips arms -- which are velcroed on -- off the doll and throws them on the floor]

[Congregation: *"Ohhhhh!"* Laughs] *"Dang it! Dang it!"* [Continues ripping legs and head off doll's body and throwing them on the floor] *"I'm really angry!"* [Congregation laughs] *"Ugh! Ugh!"*

It really helped! It really, really helped! [Congregation applauds and laughs] I want all those pieces back, by the way, when I leave tonight! [Laughs with congregation]

So say with me, *"I am not my relationships!"*

Here we go!

[With congregation]: *"I am not my relationships!"*

"I am more than this."

Alright. So if you're not all those things, what is left? Well, you are what's left! Light. The intangible you.

In the Science of Mind textbook written by Dr. Ernest Holmes he wrote, *"We are the coming forth of God into self-expression."* We are the coming forth of God into self-expression!

And I love to make things personal: I am the coming forth of God into self-expression. You are! Who do you think you are? You are the coming forth of God into self-expression! This is who we are! And this is who I hope we think -- more than think; we know -- we are.

Thich Nhat Hanh, the beautiful Zen master -- the late Thich Nhat Hunh -- said, *"Who were you before you were born?"*

That's who you still are! The expression of the Divine. The expression of the Infinite. Yes, in human form with our traits and our personalities; and our likes and our dislikes. Yes; yes. And yet, so much more than those things! We are God in expression. You are a powerful manifestation of God.

Say that with me!

[With congregation]: *"I am a powerful manifestation of God."*

Now this time I want to hear a little more gusto here. Ready?

Again. [With congregation] *"I am a powerful manifestation of God!"*

"I am a being of light of love."

[With congregation]: *"I am a being of light and love."*

And no earthly trappings will ever, ever, ever change that.

So I'm going to leave you with the question posed by Rumi, the Sufi poet, and only slightly tweaked by me. [Congregation laughs] *"If you could forget who you think you are, who could you be?"*

I say go be that! Namaste!

[Congregation applauds and whoops]

Thank you; thank you!

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