

The Whispering Voice
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Brennan Manning was an author who drips grace on every page. In his book *A Glimpse of Jesus* He quotes another grace filled author when he says: "God never says to us, 'I want you to be something else' without also saying, 'I love you as you are.'"

I am an approval addict –
I am always seeking the favor and approval of those in my life.
I strive to please and satisfy
I work hard to gain a sense of acceptance
I endeavor to experience a sense of affirmation.

And often, regardless of what I do
I hear a voice in my heart saying,
"It is not yet enough...you need to do more."
I hear it repeat the phrase,
"Not good enough, not good enough."
Something inside feels inadequate, unapproved and un acceptable.

I know the voice when I hear it;
I have heard it all of my life.
It is the inner voice of my own heart
Responding to my own sense of failure, weakness and inadequacy.
It is a voice that is so familiar and yet
When it speaks, I feel so lonely and so afraid.

I want to be accepted and approved
Fearing that I am not and cannot be.

I interpret others (whether they intend or not)
Of saying, "I want you to be something else";
Or imparting, "I want you to do something better"
Or communicating, "I expected something different from you."
And in my mind I fill in the remaining, unspoken phrase:
"And until you are, I will not love you."

And yet, I read about the Prophet Elijah
Who in the midst of his despair and fear
Struggling with the hostility of the powerful and
The ambivalence of the crowds

Ran to the desert and longed for the journey of pain
To be finished and done.

He went to the cave and there he sought to hear another voice.
The longed to hear the empowering voice of God
He wanted to feel the strengthening comfort of the Spirit
He desperately waited for the comforting presence of God

But something happened...
It was not found in the thunderous applause of the crowds.
It was not found in the words of affirmation of the king.
It was not found in the acceptance of the powerful and prestigious.
It was not found in the booming fulfillment of unrealistic expectations
What he sought was not found in
Ways he had expected or perhaps even wanted.

God came and He came to him in the still small voice
He came in the quiet moment
He came in hushed tones
He came in a whispered expression of love.

“Elijah, I have something better for you...but know I love you just as you are right now.”

“Elijah, I have a plan for your life...but know I am pleased with you right where you are at.”

“Elijah, I have great things for your future...but I am present with you without you having to do anything else.”

“Elijah, I want you to be something else, but I love you just as you are.”

So when I struggle with expectations and failures,
When I long for approval and success
But only feel shortcomings and weakness
I hear a whispered voice, a quiet come over my heart.
God speaks into my heart,

“Don, I want you to be more than you are, but I love you just as you are now.”

“Don, there is more I have for you but I am pleased with you now.”

“Don, I have so much better in store for you, but know that I approve of you as you are right now.”

“Don, I want you to be something else, but I love you just as you are.”

In the stillness, in the quiet, in the solitude
Of my thoughts, my feelings and fears and my life
I hear a whispered voice.
No longer the noise of applause and kudos
No longer the sound of condemnation and guilt
No longer the reverberations of inadequacy and failure.

I hear another voice,
Coming from the quiet and calm God
Who whispers to my soul –
“I want you to be something else (I have something better for you), but I love you just as you are.”

And my longing for approval of others wanes
As the whispered voice is heard.

Can you hear it?
Listen closely...
Under the music in the background,
Behind the noise of the surrounding crowds,
Beneath the rush of your day
He is whispering to me...and to you!

“I want you to be something else, but I love you just as you are!”