

Practice Note: Wise Contentment

Transcribed and edited from a short talk by Gil Fronsdal on June 27, 2018

There is an interesting pairing of qualities, which can be a useful reference point for practice: the pairing of contentment and discontent. It's not either-or, but more like a range. There can be degrees of discontent and degrees of contentment. In the middle where the two are balanced, I don't know what that looks like, but there is a range. If you have contentment with the ordinary circumstances of your life, the practice of meditation works really well.

For example, being here at IMC, you have all the housing you need for the next two hours – you have a roof, protection from the sun, and some privacy inside to meditate. You can be content with the clothes you have – you are all adequately dressed. Hopefully you are content with the food you had, and content with the circumstances you're in. There might be lots of discontent in your life, but the circumstance here is a place where you can feel content during this time.

Contentment supports meditation by allowing the mind to settle. If you don't avail yourself of a certain degree of contentment with your life, the discontent gives rise to an agitated mind. If it's agitated, it doesn't settle. Meditation is about settling the mind, and it's supported by feelings of contentment. I like to call this "wise contentment."

There are two things you might think about this morning. One is simply to recognize for yourself where you fit in that range of contentment and discontent at different moments. How do contentment and discontent work for you?

The second thing is that, for some people, the idea of contentment is not an operating principle they think about. It's not something they're concerned with. They have better things to do than to be content – except maybe after eating a meal, when they may be contented for a little bit. But contentment can be a more regular part of how we see our lives. Maybe there are more opportunities to be happily or wisely contented within reason. In just being here this morning for the next two hours, it's reasonable that there's a lot to be contented with.

There's a lot in the world to be discontented about, but let the world be the world. Let you be here, and see if you can find some modicum of just being content to be here: content to be breathing, content to be walking, content just to be alive in this circumstance where so much is going well. Maybe that will support your practice here.

May you be content. Thank you.