



## **Signpost Six**

**I can't give what I don't have.**

**Love, kindness and compassion start with me.**

Have you ever heard something so many times that you agree with it, but you've never paused to ask -- deep down -- if it is even your truth? Maybe it's something your family taught you by example at a young age, and you never stopped to consider a different perspective as a possibility?

For the longest time, I thought if I loved Christ, it meant I was supposed to criticize and be harsh with myself but be loving and kind to others. This belief and the behavior that came with it caused a tremendous amount of suffering and confusion in my relationship with God, myself and others.

**"In this way, I have learned that loving yourself requires a courage unlike any other. It requires us to believe in and stay loyal to something no one else can see that keeps us in the world—our own self-worth."**

**~Mark Nepo**

I went to church, A.A., CODA and eating disorder meetings. I was willing to do whatever it took to save myself. I would go back to Pat, feeling so ashamed to have to tell her I'd picked up another A.A. white chip, and she'd respond with the same thing: "You can keep going externally with all your doing, but until you go internally with your being, you will return to your set point of suffering. If you want to live from a place of peace, it is an inside job. The shift will start happening when you are willing to do the work of seeing yourself as God sees you."

What was needed was not in the doing – what was needed was a shift in being; a surrender.

***“Love What God Sees In You.”***

***~ Richard Rohr***

I was at war with myself, and no external tools could reach my internal fight. I did not trust myself or feel safe with myself – and the confusion spilled into my relationships. I wanted to go externally and be kind to others but go internally and beat myself up. I wanted others to be compassionate and patient with me when I was not compassionate and patient with myself. I was asking others to give me something I was not willing to give myself. I thought this treatment of myself was required of me to be a “good” person and a Christ-follower. I thought this approach would help me get sober and heal, but it did not work then, and it does not work now.

***“You do not become good by trying to be good, but by finding the goodness that is already within you, and allowing that goodness to emerge.”***

***~ Eckhart Tolle***

The paradox I came to understand and live from is: when I get glimpses of seeing myself the way God sees me and moments of loving myself the way God loves me, and when I can courageously bring all of me into life, life becomes about loving others. I was created to love other people and to make a difference in the world by loving them. God created me, and I believe you, to do this in our unique way. When I naturally honor the essence and spirit of who God created me to be, the honoring and love flow out of me and into the world. My time and energy are naturally spent on loving people. But when I am harsh, critical and judgmental with myself, I cannot be present for others, because my time and energy are consumed with focusing on me and everything I am doing wrong.

I heard someone in an A.A. meeting say, “Trust is built when time is spent.” We become more trustworthy of others when we spend time with them and feel safe with them. We become more trustworthy with ourselves when we can be present for and compassionate with ourselves. Time (being present) and safety (being kind) are required for a trusting relationship – and that includes the relationship with ourselves.

***“The only reason we don’t open our hearts and minds to other people is that they trigger confusion in us that we don’t feel brave enough to deal with. To the degree that we look clearly and compassionately at ourselves, we feel confident and fearless about looking into someone else’s eyes.”***

**~ Pema Chodron**

When you treat yourself the way God treats you and are kind, compassionate, loving and forgiving with yourself, everything changes. Your relationship with God, with others and with life itself. When I abused myself, the world reflected back abuse. When I began being kind, compassionate and loving with myself, I saw God in this way. I saw others in this way. I saw life in this way.

**“I love simply because I am love. Love is what I am created in and for.”**

**~Richard Rohr**

As I was shattered into so many pieces, so were all the lies I had carried around about myself. I’d clung to these beliefs, but as I held them up to the light, I realized just how untrue they were. Compassion means being willing to see as God sees. The worn-out belief that loving others requires hurting myself could no longer hold space in my mind or my heart. It was a lie, and the time had to come to let that shit go!

Love God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. And, love your neighbor AS you love yourself. You are included in this equation. If you exclude yourself, the request is incomplete.

There is ancient wisdom that asks us to, “Love God with all your heart and love others as you love yourself.” It is an offering to love the Creator AND to love others in the way we are loving ourselves.

### Does the way you love others mirror the way you love yourself?

I know I am seeing from the world’s perspective when I become rigid, harsh, critical and judgmental. I battle myself. This keeps me working and doing things to try to get others to like me and win their approval. When I do not like myself, I hustle and work for others to like me, and I give them my power and my peace. I am on the hunt to know I matter based on how others and the world see me. I have gone externally for something that can only be found internally. I know if my identity is based on another’s perspective of me, then I will never be at peace, because their views and opinions of me fluctuate based on my performance. This doesn’t mean I don’t want to be liked, it just means that I will no longer betray my truth over fear of rejection.

Can you feel the truth and the freedom here? The surrender to become – *free*? I get to choose war or peace, it starts with me.

And if I am not in possession of something, then how can I freely give it to others? If I am not kind, loving and compassionate with myself, how can I be kind, loving and compassionate with others? If I want to give something away, I need to receive it and be in possession of it first. What is inside is what comes out.

I often quote Wayne Dyer’s interpretation of this: “If I want to give you an orange and I am not in possession of an orange, then I can’t give you an orange.” This is easy to agree with. Can we apply the same concept of physical things to emotional ones as well?

If I am not in possession of – if I have not received -- kindness, compassion and love, then I cannot freely give it to another. If judgment is inside of me, then judgment is what will come out. It doesn’t matter if I am referring to a person, place, thing, or even God. How I see myself is how I see God, the world and my relationships. What is inside of me becomes my perspective, the lens through which I see.

My prayer is that you will get still and create some space in your mind, heart and spirit. Ask God what is your truth, and what is God’s truth for you? What is God

saying to you directly? If something resonates with you, then spend some time sewing it to your heart. If it does not, then throw that shit out the window. Your journey is between you and God. My intention is to share tools that changed my life from a set point of suffering to a set point of peace. As they say in A.A, “take what you want and leave the rest.”

### ***The Practice, Sewing It to Your Heart***

How do you see God?

How do you believe God sees you?

Rob Bell in *Nooma Dust* says, “It is important to believe in God, but it is more important to see that God believes in you.” Do you believe that God believes in you?

Are you willing to see yourself the way God sees you?

What needs to shift for you to live your life in the way that God has created and called you to live?

Do you feel and know the difference between your internal (spirit) and your external (physical) self?

Can you find compassion for both?

Can you see how the world focuses on and values your external self?

Can you see how you focus on and value your external self?

What internal healing needs to happen so that you can honor and feed your spirit?

Do you spend most of your time being at war or at peace with yourself?

***“Our own life has to be our message.”***

***~ Thich Nhat Hanh***

What message is your life writing?

***“One of the greatest obstacles to giving unconditional love is our fear that the love may not be returned. We don’t realize that the feeling we seek lies in the giving, not in the receiving. If we measure love received, we will never feel***

*loved. Instead, we will feel shortchanged. Not because we really were, but because that act of measuring is not an act of love. When you feel unloved, it is not because you are not receiving love; it is because you are withholding love."*

*~ Elizabeth Kubler Ross*