

Week 6: Unbecoming Who You Are Not

I once knew an artist who told me about a sculpture he wanted to carve out of wood.

He said he had a vision for it in his mind's eye. Then a week passed. And then two. And then three. I assumed he was procrastinating. Finally, when I asked him about it, he smiled and said, "Kelly, I can't create what I want to create in just any block of wood. Every piece of wood has different grains and different textures. If you carve against the grain—try to force it into something it is not—you will crack the wood and ruin the sculpture. The shape of any creation is already in the wood. I just help it to become the shape that it already is."

It's true of wood, and it's true of people.

You already are what you are becoming. Being human isn't about finding an existence worth living, it's about finding out how to live from the worthiness already existing within us. You don't build what you are; you chip away at what you are not. We are, each of us, like blocks of wood, and becoming our true self is the gradual process of carving away the excess and steadily becoming more and more the shape of what we already are. We spend too much time trying to carve against the grain of who we are—a kind of on-going self-rejection, a way of stubbornly insisting we aren't good enough and we need to become something different.

Discovering our true self begins by trusting there is a shape buried within us, and it is already good enough, loveable, and worthy.

Several weeks after I asked my artist friend about his delay, I spoke with him again, and he was giddy with excitement. He told me he'd found what he thought was the right piece of wood, and he'd begun his work. He was thrilled, because he was about to watch the beauty emerge. This is my definition of grace: grace is the delight that happens when someone or Someone sees us and sees the beautiful shape already residing somewhere within us.

Grace doesn't necessarily change anything about us; it simply sees who we've always been.

And grace creates places of safety where we are free to carve out of all our unnecessary parts—all the confusion and false starts and loneliness and self-rejection. You may be a mess, but you are also, already, what you are becoming. You are beautiful, and you are beloved.

Happy chiseling.