

VULNERABILITY

Matthew 26:36-42. This was a **vulnerable** moment that Jesus had with His disciples and His Father, was it not? It was a very troubling evening He had. His soul was troubled. An angel came to strengthen Him. His sweat became as drops of blood. Yet, He didn't keep it to Himself. He took with Him three close friends to stay with Him. He told them He was sorrowful and then He went to His knees to the Father. He was vulnerable. Your Lord was vulnerable. He was fighting against the flesh that evening. Feeling what you feel. Fighting fear and what was to come. He was vulnerable and He shared it with others. His vulnerability had a purpose and it was ultimately to do God's will.

Had a good conversation with a Christian and this topic (among others) came up. It can be difficult, even in the body at times, to be vulnerable. There are a few reasons that come to mind and we'll get into that today, but God invites us to be vulnerable with Him and the right people in the right way. Today we're looking to God's word for guidance and asking ourselves, "Can others be vulnerable with me? Am I vulnerable with others?"

Knowing that we typically hold on to the last thing we hear, I don't want to end with the negative side of this topic. So, allow me to get something out of the way. There is a time and place to be vulnerable. We need to learn discretion.

- **Proverbs 3:21–22** "My son, do not lose sight of these - keep sound wisdom and discretion, and they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck."
- **Proverbs 29:11** A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.
 - I would share too much information as a child. Your kid ever do that? Ever have to tell your child, "Okay, I want you to come to me with anything, but you don't have to tell me everything."
 - Recently met two sweet little girls at Cadence's soccer game. "Our parents are getting a divorce." "Oh, I'm sorry to hear that" I said. "Yeah, our dad isn't nice to our mom. We don't like CPS coming to our house" they replied. My heart broke for them, but I'm also thinking, "You shouldn't be telling me this." We have to watch out for this as adults as well.
 - There's also danger in being "so vulnerable" that it loses its meaning and becomes false. Vulnerability with no wish to grow, learn, strengthen or change. Simply trying to seem "deep and sincere." In religion it can become a strange "one-up" routine.
 - Yes, we have to make sure that we don't go from being vulnerable to cowards either.

I don't typically do this, but to make sure we're on the same page, I'm looking at the definition for **vulnerable**:

1. capable of or susceptible to being wounded or hurt, as by a weapon: a *vulnerable* part of the body.
 - This is what Jesus became by coming in the flesh and dying on the cross. **Hebrews 2:14-16; 2 Corinthians 13:4a; Philippians 2:5-8.**
2. open to moral attack, criticism, temptation, etc.: an argument *vulnerable* to refutation; He is *vulnerable* to bribery.
 - Jesus was not saved from temptation (**Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 2:17-18, 4:14-16**).

Some of the synonyms for vulnerable? Defenseless, exposed, sensitive, susceptible, unsafe and weak. Any of those sound good to you? No one wakes us and says, "I'm really gonna work on being defenseless today" or "Okay, weakness . . . here I come!" I don't remember the last time someone said, "You know what's great about that guy? He's incredibly sensitive. I mean, when I hear the term 'sensitive', I think of that guy right there." Right? No one tells their daughter as she's leaving for the day, "Hey, remember . . . be unsafe today."

Now, some people struggle being vulnerable because of personality or your upbringing. To many, the weakness in being vulnerable isn't acceptable. Perhaps it's seen as being too emotional or "not manly." After all, didn't Paul literally write to the church in Corinth, "*Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.*" **1 Corinthians 16:13**. Yep, and the next verse states, "*Let all that you do be done in love.*" **1 Corinthians 16:14**. I can't imagine David's leader of his army saying, "Okay men, remember before we attack the Ammonites and Syrians . . . that we do so in love." There's a context to everything, isn't there? Joab told his brother Abishai (uh-BYE-shy) before going into battle, "*Be of good courage, and let us be courageous for our people, and for the cities of our God, and may the Lord do what seems good to Him.*" **2 Samuel 10:12**. The Philistines encouraged each other before going to war with Israel, "*Take courage, and be men, O Philistines, lest you become slaves to the Hebrews as they have been to you; be men and fight.*" **1 Samuel 4:9**. For sure, there is a time to be brave and do what God considers good. For the church of Corinth it meant facing their sin: stop ignoring your problems. Start doing what you should have been doing and stop what you shouldn't have been. Be courageous. Act like men. Do it in love. Listen, some powerful individuals in the Old Testament showed vulnerability.

There are many vulnerable moments in the Bible.

- You see it with Moses as he's tasked to lead Israel out of Egypt. He had to face some real fear and anxieties when he faced Pharaoh or the demands of God's people and he expressed them to God. This is a man, by the way, who struck down another man.
- You can see it with David and his best friend, Jonathan. You can see David's vulnerability in his songs to God. We're talking about David, the warrior, who struck down "his ten thousands." **1 Samuel 18:7**.
- You can read about it in Habakkuk as he faces the reality of Babylonian captivity.

- It's everywhere. There is no contradiction in Scripture. You can be vulnerable while also being courageous. In fact, one could argue that being vulnerable is courageous. You're not fixated on what others may think - you're purposely leaving yourself open to attack, but do so in order to find strength in a time of need.

Here's why vulnerability is needed.

- Repentance:
 - **Matthew 5:3** Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
 - **Luke 7:36-50.**
 - How would you feel if you witnessed this? What could you learn?
 - **Courage to face your sins?** Listen to the criticism of those around the table. What will others think of me? What will they say about me? Will they trust me anymore? Will I no longer be useful? Yet, she didn't care what others thought about her. She was thankful for Jesus and believed in Him. **Who would you want to confess your sins to - this woman or Simon?** Who could relate to you? Who would show sympathy?
 - **Humility?** It's closely tied to the first point, but it needs attention. People who won't admit their sin are not only harming themselves, but leading others into a pit. Simon is so focused on this woman, but Jesus said he needed to focus on himself. Many times prideful people really do struggle seeing themselves as they truly are. They don't like looking in the mirror. They don't like admitting weaknesses. They'll admit what they're comfortable with in a safe manner. So many times we're **too proud to admit that something has a hold of us, that we don't have a hold on it.** We like to look like nothing gets passed us. "We all sin and fall short" is what we'll say, but when someone says, "Could you share a moment when you really messed up" we'll shy away or try to make ourselves look good. We'll try to get you to "understand." Where's the one who can stand up and courageously say, "I am the man!" **This woman reminds us that sin is not okay, but we're not the only ones.**
 - **Emotions aren't always bad.** Sometimes I fear we struggle with emotion in the body. We've seen others go overboard. I get it. We've heard arguments based on emotion. I get that, too. However, we complain about the church feeling too cold or like a corporation, but then keep our thoughts and emotions to ourselves and wonder why nothing feels differently. Have you ever cried with someone? David and Jonathan did. Jesus did. In the body, we'll experience good times and difficult times. Paul plainly taught, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep." **This woman teaches us that there's a time to express, even in tears, what you're feeling.**
 - **Spiritual depth.** This woman appreciates what really matters. Many times we're not vulnerable, because we've not come to grips with the seriousness of

our spiritual lives. This was no joke to this woman. Not only would this woman be approachable and sympathetic, but she would also give sound council, because she wouldn't sugar coat the need for Jesus and living for Him. She would encourage confession to God and one another. You want someone you know gets the big picture. Someone who will hold you accountable. Someone who will challenge you to grow closer to Jesus with humility. This, brethren, is what seekers are looking for. They're looking for the real deal. No posers. People who were in desperate need of Jesus' forgiveness, who have found it and appreciate the grace of God. You can see it in their actions. **This woman is teaching us how to build trust between us and our God and one another.**

So, what kind of atmosphere do we want here at North Collin? At the end of the day, it begins with each individual. Are you vulnerable with others? Could they be vulnerable with you?