

1. Introduction

- a. How many of you young people have played a video game where you had to fight bad guys? (lots!).
 - i. And what do you do when you get to the BOSS level and you can't beat it?
 - ii. You go online and look up a cheat code.
 - iii. That "cheat code" unlocks the "invulnerability" mode of the game, where your player becomes impervious to pain, damage or loss of health. It is often referred to as "God Mode."
 - iv. INVULNERABILITY to the world, is a prized attribute.
 - v. On the contrary, being VULNERABLE is something we all avoid. Why?
2. If there is one quality besides "love" that Jesus modeled for us, it is vulnerability.
 - a. In fact, **it is impossible to love or be loved without being vulnerable.**
 - b. So to be vulnerable, means you are susceptible to being hurt. Am I right?
 - i. So how many of us like being hurt? None of us. In fact, we go to great lengths to protect ourselves from pain.
 - ii. But when you get into relationships, it is virtually impossible to have a close relationship with someone else without making yourself somewhat vulnerable, by opening up your secrets, by laying your emotions on the table.
 1. **I can recall the most vulnerable moment of my life...when I took Jennifer to a fancy restaurant in 1984 and handed her a box with a diamond ring in it and asked her to marry me. Her reply? "Its so beautiful." The people at the table next to us prompted her to say "yes." Talk about holding your breath!**
 - iii. Can you remember the first time you said you loved someone? And there is that big pause, that long silence that follows...and they say "thank you" instead of "I love you too?"
 - iv. So you understand what it means to "feel vulnerable" right?
3. Okay, now lets take this into life in the Kingdom of God.
 - a. **Vulnerability is the opposite of hidden, it is the antithesis of shame, it is the fruit of grace, and the result of faith.** (my definition)
 - i. **Where did we lose our ability to be vulnerable?** Of course, in the garden. After Adam sinned, he HID from God. That act of hiding wasn't just physical hiding, because you can't hide from God, right? He knows everything.
 - ii. Genesis 3:6-11 *"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" 10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." 11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"*
 - iii. What was lost in the garden wasn't just our relationship with God, but our innocence, our freedom from shame, and our ability to be "naked" before God and one another without fear.

1. You notice I said “fear.” Because that is what resists vulnerability. Fear is what opposes it. Adam said “I was afraid BECAUSE I was naked.” Of course God replies, “who told you that you were naked?”
 2. No one. He became SELF-conscious. Up until then, Adam possessed uncontaminated God consciousness. But once sin entered his life, that changed. He started to see himself instead of seeing God.
- b. I believe that SHAME is the antithesis of VULNERABILITY.
- i. We are raised to feel shame when we do something wrong.
 - ii. Shame is different than guilt. Guilt says I did something wrong.
 - iii. Shame says “there is something wrong with me.”
 - iv. It is like when our puppy does something wrong, we scold it with “what did you do!”
 - v. Shame results in hiding. Hiding, covering up, putting layer upon layer of stuff to hide the stuff we are afraid will make us LOOK BAD.
 - vi. And in the ABSENCE of a loving environment, **Shame is a natural response to fear of exposure.**
- c. Hebrews 4:12-16 *“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. 13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. 14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin. 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*
- i. This passage in Hebrews brings us full circle. It demonstrates the amazing ability of God to see into us and love us perfectly even though we are imperfect.
 - ii. **God sees everything we are hiding.**
 1. Look at v13, *“Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”*
 2. God sees us the way we are. Nothing about us scares Him or takes Him by surprise. He knows where you have been, He knows what you have done. He knows what you watched on television, He knows how you spoke to your kids, He knows what books you’ve read and He knows what thoughts you’ve had. He knows your pain and He knows your anger. You can hide nothing from Him.
 3. In spite of this, He comes to you in the person of Jesus Christ and says “come.” Come to me. I want you. I want a relationship with you. I want to take your burdens. I want to be your Lord. I know everything about you. You do not need to be afraid.
 4. He doesn’t say your sin is okay, instead He says, He will take it FROM YOU. He knows the burden it has created for you. He knows the pain you have been bearing.
 5. Father God is in this room right now, and He sees your heart. He sees the hiding you have been doing. The pain you have been “covering up” with stuff so that no one else will see it. He knows what you have been going through. There is no more need to hide from Him. He isn’t mad at you. He comes to pick you up and embrace you and take your pain. Won’t you let Him?
 - iii. **God is aware of your struggles** (15)
 1. Hebrews 4:15 *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-- yet was without sin.*

2. Jesus walked this earth and in his perfect love and perfect vulnerability, gave his life for you. He struggled in every way like you and I do. He experienced disappointment, hurt, pain, hunger, being alone, being rejected, all without sin. He was just as we are. Except without sin.
- iv. Maybe you have never come to Jesus. He may just be a religious name to you. But He wants to be your friend, your Savior and Your God. Won't you open your heart to Him today?

4. Boasting in our Weaknesses (not hiding them)

- a. 2 Corinthians 12:9 *"But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."*
- b. **Your weaknesses are nothing to be ashamed of**, but rather boasted in.
 - i. Jesus didn't live by protecting himself. He made it clear that when you make yourself weak before people, you must trust Father to protect you. That requires a nice leap of faith! But Jesus didn't just talk the talk, he walked the walk. He modeled this for us:
 - ii. *"He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth."* (Isa 53:7).
- c. Most people live with tons of self-doubt. Most people live in prisons of fear and understand that they mess up everyday. The key to unlock the prison door is found in vulnerability.
 - i. It is human to mess up. Jesus says, *"here is grace for those who fail."*
 - ii. **When I was younger, I found it easier to be vulnerable. That was before the hurts and the wounds of a couple dozen relationships and sour friendships and the experience of being used by others for their own gain. Some of you have been hurt so badly in your life, maybe never even getting to experience the innocence of childhood, that you have walled off your life so that no one can ever hurt you again. The problem with that is "without vulnerability, we cannot love or be loved." It is a terrible double edged sword.**
 - iii. **But as a Christian, we have the love of Christ poured out in our hearts, He knows us better than we know ourselves, and He loved us to death (literally). He held nothing back, knowing how badly we would hurt him, He still went to the cross, because by being vulnerable, he could give us his infinite love.**
 - iv. Seth Barnes says, *"Vulnerability allows us to take the enemy's weapons and use them against him."*

5. Follow the leader

- a. 2 Corinthians 6:11-13 *"We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. As a fair exchange--I speak as to my children--open wide your hearts also."*
 - i. Don't follow a leader who doesn't model vulnerability. A leader worth following wears his humanity without shame.
 - ii. Jesus said he came to set the captives free. That's not just those who are demonized or are in the grips of evil. Jesus holds the key to every ankle chain and every prison door restraining us.
 1. But we have to confess our sins, not just to Him, but to one another. Doing so breaks the power that secrets hold over us.
 2. James 5:16 promises us physical healing if we are sick, but before praying, James instructs us, we should confess our sin to each other.
 3. That, folks, is the power of vulnerability. It is the antecedent to revival; it is the foundation stone to true community.
 - iii. Jesus had many vulnerable times in his life but 2 big ones stick out; when he laid aside his God mantle and was born as a helpless baby into a violent world under siege, and the

other was when he laid down, naked and beaten, onto a slab of wood to get pinned there for certain death and misery. Can we empty ourselves out like that? No. Not without the supernatural power of the Humble One living through us.

- b. One of the qualities of leaders that people will follow is one who leads with his lame leg forward as opposed to trying to appear or be perceived as strong.
 - i. Instead of saying, “I got it all together, come be like me.” We say, “I am a fellow struggler, just like you.”
 - ii. That's why its such a big deal when famous Christians fall because of sin (Ted Haggard, J. Swaggart, etc) because they lived out of their strength instead of their weaknesses. I wonder if people would have responded if these guys had led with their lame leg and boasted in our weaknesses?
 - iii. **We don't bring glory to God by looking strong, but rather, by being REAL.**

6. GOD MODE revisited

- a. God mode might be what we all would like to attain to, being “invulnerable” but the truth is, when we select God Mode in this life, what we are doing is something far different.
- b. You see, **God is not invulnerable at all.** We may not “hurt Him” but “He hurts for us.”
 - i. He knows our pain. He watched His Son die on a cross, rejected by us (by men), scorned, spit on and hated, despised and cursed. He gave His only begotten Son to us to redeem us from sin and from its control and consequences, and we rejected Him.
 - ii. If God were invulnerable, He would have taken that rejection and wiped us out with a blink of His eye. But He loved us SO MUCH...He hurt for us. He Hurt for you.
- c. Would you like to receive that perfect love of God? Would you like to live in it forever? You can.

i.

7. My Thoughts

- a. My Vulnerability can help make others feel safe.
- b. Vulnerability requires and leads to compassion.
- c. Vulnerability requires humility, seeing yourself as God sees you.
- d. Vulnerability can lead to others opening up, which leads to truer and deeper community.
- e. Vulnerability requires faith, because we have to believe that though we expose our soft underbelly, we can trust that God Himself will protect us.
- f. The coverings of this life may be snatched away in an instant, causing us to feel exposed and alone. Sometimes that is exactly where we need to be, because then we begin to see ourselves as openly as God does. In our brokenness, as we realize how weak we are, and understand that we cannot help ourselves, God comes close to us with His extreme grace. He offers us the faith to call out to Him, and then invites us to come close, knowing that He will receive us and help us.
- g. -Some of you have been going through hard times.

8.

- a. Opening WIDE our hearts. How hard is that?

Do you hide your weakness or allow God to demonstrate his power through it?