

Being Vulnerable with God

What does it mean to be vulnerable?

To be vulnerable means to be susceptible to an attacker an injury. It means having your guard down and leaving yourself open.

Why do you think men are so fearful of feeling vulnerable?

As men, we strive to remove vulnerabilities. We do everything imaginable to ensure that we do not leave ourselves open to attack and, when we do, we lash out, frustrated at ourselves for allowing this vulnerability.

God Knows You Are Vulnerable

We may not like being vulnerable, but here is a reality that each one of us needs to face – we are all vulnerable. No matter how strong you are, how many precautions you take, or how you steady yourself, you are going to be vulnerable. This is why we need God.

How does a statement like that make you feel?

God knows everything about you. He knows your strengths and your weaknesses, your joys and your sorrows, and your loves and hatreds. He knows everything about what makes you tick, and He is prepared to help you through every challenge you face, because He knows you so well.

Someone else knows you really well. That is Satan. He knows all of your vulnerabilities as well. No matter how much you try to defend against his attacks, he is prepared for you. He knows exactly what it is going to take to get you to falter, and that starts by getting you to run away from the very thing that will help you the most (God) and toward that which will cause you to be destroyed.

1 Peter 5:8 says: ⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Your adversary is the devil. He is prowling around looking to destroy everyone in his path. An interesting aspect of this verse is the comparison to a roaring lion. A roaring lion sneaking up on an elk or antelope would seem to be a bad tactic. The prey would hear the lion roaring and would run away. Instead, the old lion, the one who is no longer able to chase the elk or antelope, goes to one side of the prey, while the young lions go to the other side. He then roars, causing the antelope, elk, or other animals to run the opposite direction. That is where the other lions are waiting, easily capturing and devouring their meal.

Satan knows exactly how to get you to run toward the very thing that is going to destroy you. He also is able to get you to run away from God, the one Person who can protect you. This is why he is a very formidable enemy.

Can you think of instances where you wound up choosing the very thing that caused you harm or trouble?

God fully understands this. This is why He tells you to draw close to Him. He understands that you are vulnerable and that the only way you are going to succeed is by drawing closer to Him.

What Makes Us Vulnerable to Satan?

Do you think that you are vulnerable to the attacks of Satan?

Satan knows where your struggles lie. However, it is not in the struggle itself where Satan is able to destroy. It is in the things that we say to ourselves, those voices that are discouraging us from seeking God.

Where we thrive and overcome the roaring lion is by opening ourselves to God and to others. Going to your brothers or close Christian confidantes and talking to them about the struggles we face. This will be discussed more in the next section. However, there are four primary reasons why we choose not to reach out to others for help.

Pride – The biggest of these is pride. As men, we often equate vulnerability with weakness. We believe that to be vulnerable and to make ourselves vulnerable to others makes us weak. So, we keep our insecurities and challenges to ourselves.

This is a great tactic that Satan uses to destroy us. He wants you puffing up your chest, refusing to share your burdens and fears with others out of concern that you will be laughed at or looked at as weak. Jesus was the greatest man to walk the earth, a very tough man, but He cried, had fears, was worried, and was even betrayed. Yet, He still revealed Himself and shared His concerns with His brothers.

James 4:6 tells us that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. When you humble yourself and seek God, putting aside your pride, know that you are going to defeat Satan.

Why do you think pride is such an issue for men?

Secrecy – Where does sin thrive? In secrecy. There are a lot of reasons why we keep things secret, including pride, fear, and mistrust, however, it is important to include this as a separate reason because we keep so many of our transgressions a secret. This is why we never get better. We build a culture around secrecy.

Often, the reason why alcohol and drug addiction thrives in the individual is because no others really know the severity of it. Others may not even know that there is a problem at all. The person does a very effective job of hiding his or her drinking or drug use until he or she reaches a point where it simply cannot be hidden any longer. By that time, it has ruined that person's life and likely the lives of those he or she loves most.

Here is why secrecy is a big concern – secrecy gives sin power. It is that thing that you are holding onto that makes it impossible for you to seek help, because it is a secret. It is

something you are fearful about telling others. It may even be something that you are enjoying so much that you refuse to let it go.

This is what often happens with pornography or gambling. It is just watching one or two videos or placing small bets originally, but the person sees no issue in it because they are enjoying it. It is fun to see if you will win lots of money. It is enjoyable to lust after beautiful women, and it is perfectly legal for you to do both things. However, we often keep that a secret from others. Then, we find ourselves in massive debt or pursuing other avenues for sexual gratification, including paying for prostitutes, chasing women on dating sites, or having sexual relations with women we don't even find particularly attractive. What was permissible becomes a giant trap. This is why the Bible tells us that all things are lawful, but all things are not helpful (1 Corinthians 10:23).

It is hard to get out of that behavior because we have built a culture of secrecy surrounding it. That culture will destroy you.

James 5:16 says that we should confess our sins to one another and pray for one another so that we can be healed. James is telling us that we need to stop letting our sins be a secret. We need to confess them, because confessing and telling others about our sins removes the power sin has over your life.

Why do we keep things secret?

How do you think that secrecy has impacted your life?

Fear/Shame – Like secrecy, fear and shame are often rooted in these other reasons. Almost always, the reason we keep something secret is out of fear and shame. We are ashamed of the things that we are doing because we know they are wrong. We just don't know what to do about them. We are then fearful to tell others out of that shame. In many cases, we feel that the person will ridicule us, disregard what we're doing, or make us feel stupid. So, we never speak about it.

This point cannot be stressed enough to you. Fear and shame will destroy you. Not because you should feel fear or shame, but because we perceive that this is how we should feel. The person who has an affair continues on that pathway out of fear of what others will say when they find out. There's a huge amount of shame surrounding that, so they never confess it. Then they live in fear of what will happen when it's discovered.

The same is true of alcohol and drug addiction or any other type of behavior that is sinful or unhealthy. Your fear and shame will take over your life and you will do everything possible to keep that thing a secret.

1 John 4:18 tells us that there is no fear in love and that love drives out fear. When you seek the counsel of your brother, pastor, or close friend, confessing your sin, not giving a place to fear and shame, you are able to relieve that burden and fear disappears.

How has fear and shame affected you in your life?

What kinds of things do these feelings say to you that keeps you from talking about your struggles?

Mistrust – This leads us to our final reason why we make ourselves vulnerable to Satan. We simply don't believe that we can trust others with our dark secrets and sinful behavior. That is another lie that Satan roars that you will stop you from defeating the power sin has in your life.

Now, it is important to note that you should not trust everyone with your struggles. There were those whom you should not trust. However, you should and need to have one or two people, hopefully more, that you can go to and talk to about the very things that are destroying your life. This is one of the primary concepts of AA, having a sponsor who you can reveal your resentments, failures, transgressions, and other similar types of thoughts to.

Proverbs 17:17 tells us that a friend loves at all times and a brother is born for adversity. You need a close friend who is like a brother who is there for you during your trying times. Who can walk with you and your burdens, pick you up when you have fallen, carry you when you are struggling, and comfort you when you are shaken.

Do you have someone or a group of people you can talk to about your struggles? If so, how did that relationship develop to where you could trust that person?

Tearing Down the Strongholds

In 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, Paul writes: **³ For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ⁵ We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.**

Another word for vulnerabilities is stronghold. So, you may wonder what a stronghold is. If you think of the time when Paul wrote that phrase, a stronghold would have been a castle on top of a hill or overlooking a body of water. It would have been a fortress, with tall walls, and hundreds of soldiers and archers protecting the stronghold.

This is a great picture of what we do with our vulnerabilities. We protect them. They become such an integral part of our lives that we do everything we can to protect them, even if they are destroying us.

You may be able to relate to this. Your drug or alcohol use became such a significant part of your life that you would battle with anybody who tried to stop you from using. You held that with such passion and refused to let it go, maybe even being willing to fight others who tried to stop you.

If this is where you are at, you are not alone. Each one of us has strongholds in our lives. Strongholds do not have to be related directly to addictions. They can be beliefs,

obligations, or feelings. We can even have strongholds about protecting another or wishing to see others hurt.

What are some strongholds in your life?

These strongholds are very powerful. However, Paul explained that we do not battle against the strongholds with guns or fists. Instead, we use the spiritual weapons that God has given us to be able to overcome and defeat them.

This starts with putting your confidence in God. You have spent some time learning about what it means to believe in God, and trusting in Him to help you battle against your strongholds while also protecting you in your vulnerabilities. Part of what it means to believe in God is that you can trust Him to help you in your struggles, which includes your vulnerabilities.

You have a formidable enemy. Even more important is that you have an even more formidable God. You need to lean on Him.

You also need to have trust in at least one or two people. In your challenges and struggles, you need to have a person or people who can pray with you, advise you on the right steps to take, help support you when you feel beaten, and stand with you and beside you when you need them.

God is there to help you to destroy those strongholds. He is giving you divine power if you trust in Him. He has given you support in your friends and brothers to help you overcome those strongholds and vulnerabilities. So, get ready brothers, because it is time to go to war!

Do you have someone you can confide in?

Do you have people you can count on who will pray for you?

Do you believe that God has your back and can help you through your vulnerabilities?

Bible Passages for the Week:

Monday – Galatians 6:2

Tuesday – Philippians 4:13

Wednesday – Jeremiah 7:8-10

Thursday – Psalm 72:12-14

Friday – Luke 1:37

Saturday – Pick a passage from Scripture that teaches about being protected by God during your time of vulnerability.