

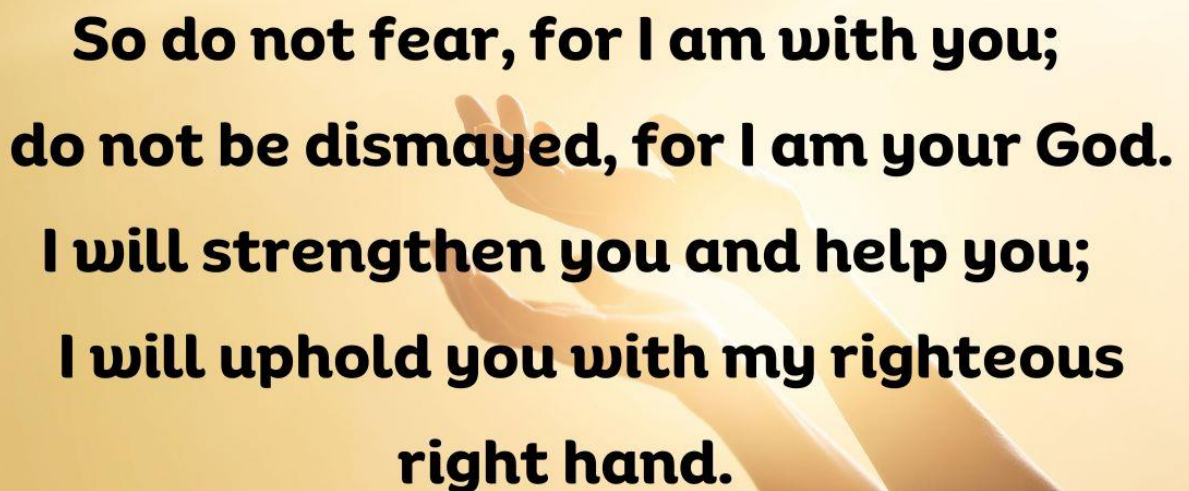
Vulnerability – God’s help

As stated by Fiona in her article, Vulnerability definition is ‘openness or susceptibility to attack or harm’. Vulnerability comes from the Latin root word, ‘wound’, meaning ‘to wound’ someone. Vulnerable people are at risk of being exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally.

Many experience vulnerability; it affects people of all ages, backgrounds, and situations. There are different types of vulnerability, which can be social, cognitive, environmental, or emotional.

Vulnerability is a common problem and we all can be vulnerable to the pain of rejection, but for some this vulnerability is more than others. Due to vulnerability often being seen as shameful, it can be difficult to talk about, especially for those that are emotionally vulnerable, as it can be scary for them, due to opening up to others and sharing their personal thoughts, feelings and experiences that may be painful.

Some individuals may carry a deep sensitivity to rejection and abandonment, and they cope by putting up an emotional “shield” to protect themselves, which may give the appearance of being strong and capable. People who are vulnerable also may experience feelings of anxiety, fear, and apprehension due to the risk of them experiencing some type of harm.



**So do not fear, for I am with you;
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you and help you;
I will uphold you with my righteous
right hand.**

ISAIAH 41:10

What does the Bible say about vulnerability?

Opening up about being vulnerable can be difficult because of the fear of being judged, hurt, and even abandoned. Yet God assures us in Isaiah 41:10 to not fear, for He is with us, He will strengthen, help us, and uphold us with His right hand.

We need to find comfort in the fact God knows our suffering, whatever we are facing is not lost on God, God recognizes our feelings and is concerned for us, it is recorded in Psalm 86:15, that God is full of compassion, and He is gracious, long suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth. The Bible also says about God's care:

- **God sees us** – We never walk alone; God is with us every step of our life. We are precious and honoured in his eyes, as in Isaiah 43:4 it says, “Since you are precious and honoured in my sight and because I love you, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life”.
- **God hears us** – Jonah records that he called for help and God listened to his cry, Jonah 2:2. When we endure suffering, it can be hard to feel that God is near us, but God is always listening.
- **God is with us** – In Psalm 23:4 it records “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me”. God will be a refuge, for those that are oppressed, and a refuge in times of trouble or distress.
- **God is near to the broken-hearted** – In Psalm 34:18 it is recorded “The Lord is close to the broken-hearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.” Psalm 34:18. God is the God of all comfort: who comfort's us in all our troubles.
- **God receives us when we're overwhelmed** – Matthew 11:28 - “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. We also sing the hymns with the words, I came to Jesus as I was, weary, and worn, and sad. I found in him a resting place, and He has made me glad, and another hymn we sing is, Lord, uphold me day by day, shed a light upon my way. Guide me through perplexing snares, care for me in all my cares.
- **We can choose to release our fears to God** - 1 Peter 5:7 “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you”. We also sing the hymns with the words, “When doubts and fears arise, when storms o'erspread the skies, shine through the cloud and rain, through sorrow, toil, and pain, make Thou my pathway plain, teach me Thy way, and Look to your Maker, He's promised to help you, and waits for your call. Just tell Him your trouble, He is the Almighty, there's nothing too big, and there's nothing too small” (Hymn 165).

Signs of vulnerability

We need to try and be aware and look out for people who may be vulnerable. It may be difficult to spot vulnerability in others, as it is hard for some to share their thoughts and feelings. Many people that are vulnerable are reluctant to say if they are finding life difficult and need a helping hand. We need to listen and get to know each other; we can listen for vulnerability in conversations we have with one another and get to know each other and look for the signs.

Vulnerability, as we have explained, can be hard to see, and you could be standing next to someone who is trying their best in life, so remember whatever we do, do it with kindness in our hearts. We need to not be too quick to rush in and try to fix what we see as someone else's vulnerability and remember we don't have to understand or know all the answers to show kindness and be caring. Never underestimate the value of little things, like a kind word or sending a text or card can mean a lot.

Some signs of vulnerability can be, and are not limited to:

- Someone that does not open up easily, not trusting others, and they may hide a lot of their emotions.
- Someone that may apologise too much. E.g., when it is not their fault, or it is done to avoid any potential conflicts or arguments.
- A change in their behaviour or presentation.
- Someone that questions if people liked them.
- Someone that is not involved or on the fringe of social activities.
- Someone that comes in late and leaves early from meetings, or not attending regularly, so they don't interact with others.
- Someone that has loved ones which has control over them.

How to help someone suffering from vulnerability

Let us watch out for those that are vulnerable in our brothers and sisters, we need to take the time to get to know one another, so that we can notice when our brethren and sisters need encouragement or care. We need to be aware of ways we can help those that are vulnerable, understanding that they can be sensitive and may be hiding behind their shield, that they feel safe behind. We need to show kindness and let them know that we are here for them when they need us. Kindness can make a BIG difference. This might just be a phone call or text. Giving someone your time is the greatest gift, as when you give them your time, you are giving them a portion of your life. We need to use our voice for kindness, our ears for compassion, our hands for charity, our mind for truth, and our heart for love.

To make a difference in someone's life, we do not have to be brilliant, rich, beautiful, or perfect, we just must care. Some ways to do this is:

- **Don't judge others** – We have no idea what their journey is about, we should respect their decisions, without judgement.
- **Encourage others** - Encourage them to be involved in things, this gives them a sense of purpose and social connection. We need to remember that even small steps in the right direction is success and recovery, and we need to acknowledge each small step as encouragement for them.
- **Be patient** – Give them space to set boundaries or adapt to their comfort zone, being patient and showing them empathy and compassion.
- **Be respectful and acknowledge their feelings** – Let them know it's OK to feel fearful, overwhelmed, sad, anxious, or stressed, and not to be dismissive of their vulnerability.
- **Make time for them** – Make time to check in with them and build a rapport with them to build trust, giving them some of your time you are showing that you support them, and actions speak louder than words.
- **Offer practical support** - If someone isn't ready to talk, think about what practical support you can provide. Whether it is making a cuppa, helping with childcare, or cooking a meal, small gestures can be comforting.

The Bible instructs us to:

- **Be kind to one another** – Zechariah 4:32 “Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you”.
- **Bring joy to one another by helping them out** – Hebrews 13:16 NIV “And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased”.
- **Pray for one another** – James 5:16 “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much”. We need to pray for them to have the strength and be given the comfort to face their journey.
- **Love one another** – John 13:34 “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”
- **Be generous with one another** – 2 Corinthians 9:7 “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver”.
- **Comfort one another** – 1 Thessalonians 4:18, and 5:11 “Wherefore comfort one another with these words”, and “Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do”.
- **Honour one another** – Romans 12:10 “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another”
- **Be patient and forgive one another** – 1 Corinthians 12:13 NIV “Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you”.
- **Share one another’s burdens** – Galatians 6:2 NIV “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ’.



Conclusion

God loves us all, and we are precious in His sight. It is recorded throughout Deuteronomy and Joshua and then in Hebrews that God says, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'. Deuteronomy 31:6, 8, Joshua 1:5, and Hebrews 13:5.

We need to remember that in Colossians 3:12, we are told to show kindness and mercy to our brethren and sisters, while being kind and tender hearted to one another, and non-judgemental, but accepting of each other. Zechariah 7:9.

Let's do the best we can to minimise the effects of closed vulnerability in our brothers and sisters as we travel together in this wilderness journey until our Lord returns, and we come to the promised land.

Kylee Mingham
