

## Vulnerability - openness

According to Dictionary.com, vulnerability is defined as either an ‘openness or susceptibility to attack or harm’ or ‘willingness to show emotion or to allow one’s weaknesses to be seen or known. A willingness to risk being emotionally hurt.’

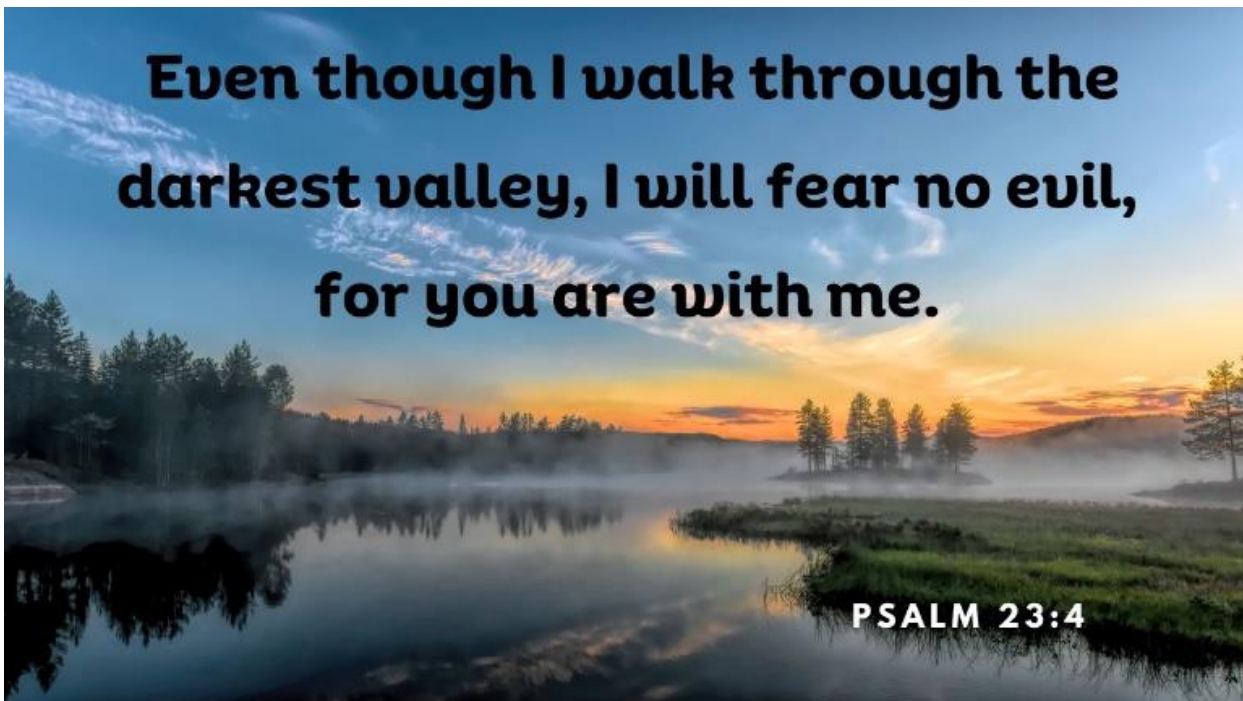
Current theory around vulnerability states that in relationships, vulnerability is a key factor in gauging the strength of that relationship. It can help to create stronger bonds, can bring down emotional walls, invites honesty within the relationship and can contribute to more open communication – all of which leads to better authenticity within that relationship.

What arises from this is that being open in a relationship and willing to communicate honestly is very important. A word of warning though. In an instance of a person who is afraid because they are vulnerable, and there is a possibility of violence, it might not be wise to counsel them to be vulnerable/open because of possible negative consequences.

So, what are some examples of vulnerability in Scripture and how did it impact on relationships?

Let’s look at Psalm 51 as a beautiful example of vulnerability. We know the story of David’s sin with Bathsheba and his initial attempts to hide this sin. Once he recognizes that he cannot hide the sin David chooses to be vulnerable before God. He admits his sin and calls upon the characteristics of the Living God for mercy, steadfast love and cleansing of himself. David recognizes that God wants ‘truth in the inward being’ (Psalm 51:6). Although his sin must have disappointed God, David’s relationship with God appears to have gone from strength to strength, so much so that God calls him.

‘A man after my own heart’. (1 Samuel. 13:14)



An interesting contrast involving David is that with Saul. While David was open and able to develop a relationship with God, Saul lived independently of God, (1 Samuel 9:15-17) and would not consult Him in prayer for guidance. He was not open and forthcoming in his relationship (10:16). He held criticism within himself (10:27). Consequently, he was insecure (10:20-23). Without a degree of openness in our life, we can have great difficulty in our relationships. David was open with God and developed that wonderful relationship with Him. Saul was not vulnerable. He was closed and unable to develop a good relationship. We need to be vulnerable in a positive sense before God.

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### What of our Lord Jesus Christ. Did he show vulnerability and if so – how?

John chapter 8 records our Lord's attempts to teach the Jews about his Father. He was constantly contradicted, judged, ridiculed and insulted by the leaders of the day. Throughout it all, our Lord maintains a loving vulnerability, an openness, a willingness to continue to communicate. Although the Jews behaved very shabbily, our Lord maintained his own authority. He let them know that they were insulting him as in verse 49 he tells them that they 'dishonour' him.

In [Matt. 25:35-40](#) he outlined the consequences of ignoring vulnerable brethren and sisters. Not only does this call for an empathetic response on our part but we also need to display our vulnerability in attempting to help others. We open ourselves up to being hurt when trying to help others.

In [Matt10:16](#) he tells his disciples that 'I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Of course, he lived as a sheep his whole life and became our 'lamb' of God. If we are attempting to reflect his vulnerability, we too must display openness, a willingness to communicate, to show one's emotional state, if applicable, to speak truth from our inward being – to maintain our authentic selves before the Living God.

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