



Growing through times of change

Week 4 - *Sitting with vulnerability*



St Paul's
LUTHERAN CHURCH BOX HILL

Emotional vulnerability is a feeling of uncertainty or risk of being rejected, exposed, or judged as being inadequate or failing.

Learning to sit with and make space for our vulnerability has the capacity to change our lives and our relationships for the better.

Vulnerability gets its power from the felt experience in our bodies. Our basic system will automatically recognise this discomfort as threat and will want to protect us. Our conscious self will then step in and support this course of action and will push us towards a practiced path such as denial, avoidance, justification, anger or shame.

My 'higher' self is offering me important alternatives to self-protection so that this situation can work for me rather than against me. My vulnerability could be telling me:

- › *That to step forward from this place is going to require courage. That I have to focus on what really matters to me, set myself and push through.*
- › *That here is an opportunity to try something new and different that might help me to become a better version of myself.*
- › *That here is an opportunity for creativity and growth that requires a willingness to risk failure to have the chance to achieve my desires and my goals.*
- › *That it's ok to experience discomfort. That building the capacity to tolerate uncomfortable and negative emotions is part of the spectrum of life.*
- › *That here is a chance to be more authentic – to have the courage to share my feelings with others and open the way for empathy and understanding.*
- › *That true leadership and strength comes from acknowledging the struggle and challenges I experience that can lead to greater levels of respect and trust from others.*
- › *That it's ok to not cope sometimes. That we need to learn self-compassion, understanding and self-acceptance when things seem too much.*
- › *That I don't have to be in control. That I can use my faith to let go of the situation and trust in something bigger than myself.*
- › *That grace and forgiveness are needed in this situation and that I may be the one who needs to bring them.*

Which of these you choose, if any, will depend on how well you know yourself. With increasing self-awareness you have a greater opportunity to use your vulnerability to bring something positive and significant out of threat.

True vulnerability will never become something that is so familiar that we cease to be affected by it. Every time it will require me to notice, pause and choose a response that almost always feels counter-intuitive and counter-cultural. But with practice we can recognise vulnerability as an opportunity and a gift that gives us access to finding genuine freedom and joy in life.

When I stop having to protect myself, my feelings and my pride, I can come to a genuine place of openness, love and trust in relationship with others. It is a nuanced skill to be implemented with care where I demonstrate that my self-worth is inherent rather than something I have to claim and that I see and honour the worth in others.

Vulnerability's greatest recommendation lies in that it is a characteristic of God lived out in the person of his son. In him we see true vulnerability at its very best.