

I want to talk to you today about being vulnerable. It's easy to go through life trying to impress people, that we have it all together, and it's good to carry ourselves with confidence, but sometimes we have a need to keep up our image so much that, instead of being real, we put on a mask and start pretending. We can't let people see we have weaknesses. We struggle in these areas. We're people of faith. We're supposed to have all the answers.

But the scripture says God's power shows up greatest in our weaknesses. If we go around pretending, acting like we don't have any weaknesses, then God's power is not going to show up. God won't bless who you pretend to be. He looks beyond the mask, beyond the superficial. When you're big enough to admit, "God, I don't have it all together. I'm struggling in these areas. I need your help," being it's a strength. But when we pretend, and try to impress people, live for our image, that puts pressure on us. We have to perform and make sure they think I'm good, I'm strong, I'm talented. Take off the mask. You can be real.

"Well, Joel, what if they think less of me"? What they think of you they don't control your destiny. If your friends judge you for being real, they're not true friends. A true friend will accept you for who you are, faults, weaknesses, shortcomings, and all. People that judge you are not being honest with themselves. They have their own issues. They're just wearing their mask, hoping that you don't notice.

Everybody is dealing with something. There are no perfect people. But we live in a society that stresses image. It tells us if we don't have it all together, if you don't wear the latest, drive the latest, hang out with the most popular, then you're less than. This creates all kinds of pretending. We're in masks, trying to impress, and that may feel strong, but in fact, it's weak.

If you can't be honest with yourself, if you have to hide your struggles, act a certain way to keep up your image, that's going to keep you from your full potential. God is not looking for the ideal you, the pretend you, for the real you, and this is what the apostle Paul did. He said in Philippians 3, "I count not myself to have apprehended". One version says, "I'm still not everything that I should be".

Now, Paul was one of the greatest apostles that ever lived. He wrote half of the books in he was a scholar, a theologian. He spoke five languages. No one was more effective than Paul, but he had the humility to admit, "I don't have it all together. I'm doing my best, but I'm not there yet". He could've let pride hide his weaknesses, mask his shortcomings, but he was vulnerable.

He'd have said, "Hey, I wrote half of the scripture. I've attained the highest level". Paul was a great man, but as he neared his death, when he could've impressed people, when he could've bolstered his image, instead he took he was real. That's the kind of people God promotes.

There's power in vulnerability. It's okay to say, "I'm not there yet. I'm still struggling with these issues, but I'm not going to wear a mask. I'm not going around pretending. I'm at peace with not being perfect". If you're not vulnerable, you'll stop growing. If you can't be honest with yourself and say, "God, I need your help. I'm acting strong, but God, I'm afraid. I don't know which way to go," when you empty yourself out, then God will fill you.

But God cannot fill a vessel that's already full. If you're full of yourself, acting, pretending, wearing masks, there's no room for God. But when we humble ourselves and empty out our pride, our will fill us with favor, with strength. He'll help us get to the next level.

Mark chapter 9, a man had a son that was sick with something like epilepsy. He brought him to Jesus and said, "Sir, my son has all these convulsions. If you can do anything, please have compassion on us". Jesus said, "If you believe, the man said, "Yes Lord, I believe, but help me in my unbelief". He was honest. He was being vulnerable. Jesus could've said, "I just told you I'd do it. What do you mean you have doubts, you don't believe? I'm going to go find somebody else".

No, when we're honest with God, when we're real, he doesn't judge us, he doesn't turn the other way, he comes to us. Jesus went and healed this man's son. When you take off the mask and get down to the real you, maybe the doubting you, the lonely you, the insecure you, when you're vulnerable, God will begin to change things.

But sometimes we think we have to always be strong in faith, strong in courage. We can't admit we have doubts, we have fears. The scripture says, "Let the weak say, 'I am strong.'" it doesn't say you should never feel weak, never have doubts, never feel discouraged. No, "God, I feel weak today, God, I'm concerned about my finances. I don't see how it could work out. Lord, help me to believe". That's being honest before God. That's being vulnerable.

The first time John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God". He knew he was the Messiah. In Matthew chapter 3, John was baptizing Jesus. When he came up out of the water, a dove landed on Jesus, the heavens opened up, a voice boomed out, saying, "This is my beloved Son".

If anyone should've been a man of faith, it would've been John. He baptized Jesus. But a few chapters later, in chapter 11 when he was in prison, John started having doubts, thinking, "Is he really the

Messiah? Is he really the Son of God"? John sent two of his disciples to see if Jesus was now, you would think if you saw the heavens opened up, if you heard the voice boom out, you would believe, you wouldn't change your mind, but even John had doubts.

Even he didn't have it all figured out. He could've said, "I baptized the man. I told people he was the Lamb of God. I can't let anyone know that I'm not sure now. I have to keep up my image. I have to wear this mask". John's attitude was, "I'm not a pretender. I'm not trying to impress people. God ask him if he's the son of God".

What's interesting is Jesus didn't get upset. He didn't say, "Tell John he needs to have more faith. I'm disappointed in him". Jesus understood. He said, "Tell John the blind see, the crippled walk, the lepers are cured. Tell him yes, I am the Messiah".

So, when you have doubts, things you don't understand, don't be down on yourself. You didn't see the heavens open up. You didn't hear the voice boom out. John had all these signs, but it didn't disqualify him. God was not disappointed in John and he's not disappointed in you. You may not be where you think you should be. You have these questions. It's okay to say, like Paul, "I haven't apprehended it all just yet. I'm on a journey. I'm growing".

So often, we think we have to hide our struggles. We can't let God know our fears. That wouldn't be a person of faith. But you can't overcome a weakness if you don't get it out in the open. When you're honest with yourself and honest with God, and say, "God, help me break this addiction. God, help me to not be jealous of my co-worker. Help me to be more disciplined in what I watch," that's the first step to getting better.

Are you wearing a mask, pretending, trying to protect your image in front of people and in front of God? I'm asking us to take off the mask. Let's be real. Sometimes we think when we get it all together, we'll be honest. When we break the addiction, when we overcome the temptation, then God will accept us, then he'll be pleased with me. But God is not waiting for the perfect you, for the cleaned up you, for the no doubts you. He's waiting for the real you, the vulnerable you, the honest you.

God already knows everything about us. There is a freedom when you can come to God open and honest, knowing that he doesn't condemn you, he's not finding fault, he has mercy for every mistake, grace for every weakness, faith for every fear. Our attitude should be, "God, my life is an open book. I have nothing to hide. You know everything I am, everything that I'm not. Make me, mold me, help me to become who you've created me to be".

John chapter 4, Jesus was at a well in Samaria. This woman came out to get some water. Jesus asked her for something to drink. She was surprised. She said, "Sir, you're a Jew. I'm a Samaritan. We don't have anything to do with each other. Why are you asking me for something"? Jesus said, "If you knew who I was, you would ask me, and I would give you living water". She said, "Please, give me some of that water". Jesus said, "I will, but go call your husband".

I can imagine time stopped for this woman. She had had five husbands, was living with a man she life had been rough for this lady. No doubt, she had been mistreated, taken advantage of. She knew she had made mistakes. She felt bad enough about herself. She didn't need any more guilt. In town, everyone knew her. She was looked down on, made fun of. Alone, just her and Jesus, she could've thought, "I'm not telling this man my past. I'm going to put on my mask and pretend everything is fine".

She could've said, "Okay, I'll go get my husband. Wait for me, I'll be back in 30 minutes". Everything in her said, "Hide your hurts. Hide your failures. Turn and leave. Take the easy way out". She could've walked away and it would be the end of this story. Mask, years of pretending, she said, "No, this is a new day. I'm not making excuses. I'm not covering it up. I'm going to be honest". She said to Jesus, "I don't have a husband".

The first thing Jesus said was, "You have answered he was saying, 'Now you're being honest with yourself and you're being honest with me'". Jesus went on to tell her how she had five husbands and was living with this other man. She said, "Sir, you must be a prophet. We know one day the Messiah will come". Jesus looked at her and said, "I am the Messiah".

The first person Jesus ever revealed himself to as the Messiah was this woman, a woman who was vulnerable, a woman who was willing to take off the mask and not pretend everything was okay. You may have made mistakes. You're not where you think you should be. God is not displeased with where you are. He's only displeased if you get stuck there.

When Jesus asked this woman to go get her husband, he already knew she didn't have a husband. He was waiting to see what she would do. Would she be vulnerable? Would she take off the mask? God already knows our struggles, our failures, our weaknesses. When we live open and honest before God, not guilty because of past mistakes, beating ourselves up for weaknesses, pretending that everything's okay, but saying, "God, I need you. Help me to overcome. Strengthen me in my weaknesses. Give me faith to do the right thing," that's when God will do for you what he did for this woman. He will break bondages that have held you back. He will make more out of your life than you've ever even dreamed.

what I must say and today it's OK to be vulnerable you don't have to have it all together you're a work in progress God is not finished with you.

It's OK me to be vulnerable to your children you don't have to hide your weaknesses hide your struggles. take off your superman outfit sometimes you just need to be Clark can't just be real Your children will learn more from how they see you handle your struggles then they will from your successes you don't have to be strong all the time let them see you humanity. One time in my early twenty's I was in the T.V. control area after a church service at the other location my father had just finished ministering myself and some of the crew members were laughing and having fun as we were putting up the equipment and turning everything on my father came in for some reason he thought we were making fun of something that happened in the service we were we were laughing at something totally different and I tried to tell him it didn't have anything to do with that but my father wouldn't hear he let us have it told us how we should be more respectful and how we should make fun of own and on a couple hours later my father called he said Jol A blew it tonight I knew when you told me it wasn't what I thought but I was up tight about some other things and I want to ask you to forgive me I'm sorry then he asked me for the phone numbers of everyone else in the room there were 7 or 8 people he couldn't sleep until he made things right as a dad you can take care of it tomorrow nobody's going to miss it no I need to do it right now 11 o'clock at night this well respected minister called all these young men in to apologize today as a son that spoke louder to me than my father's accomplishments to see him swallow his pride and it meant that he was wrong. As to know. He could have tried to protect his image and convince himself that he was right but he was a whole new ball he was honest not just with me but with himself. When you can be honest with yourself when you're big enough secure enough to take off the man's not live for your image but you do the right thing when it's hard apologize when it's not your fault show your children you're big enough to admit that you were wrong when you live transparent before God not the fake you pretend to want to be you but the real you when you are vulnerable you apply your ball God will make you and mold you into the vessel of honor that he created you to believe. That's what these heroes of faith did Abraham John the bad this Paul they were real they had doubts they had questions they made mistakes but they didn't pretend to be super human like they had it all together they knew the power of vulnerability they knew in their weakness is God's power shows that the greatest Are you down on yourself because you have doubts fears things you don't understand are you trying to perform perfectly to protect your image to impress your friends to show your children 3

Joel Osteen - Be Vulnerable_0001 how strong you are why don't you take the pressure all there is a freedom when you can be a peace with not being perfect when you can say like Paul I'm doing my best I'm improving but I'm not there yet you all with my temper I'm better than I was 5 years ago but I'm not there yet that's OK you're making progress God said about John the Baptist there was no one any greater than him this was about a man that doubted he was the Messiah a man that had questions why are you beating yourself up over your weaknesses why are you trying to hide your struggles thinking that it's disqualifying the accuser Whisper's you still have that addiction. You should be ashamed of yourself you lost your temper again go sit on the sidelines don't believe ghost lives you may not have attained it all you're not there yet the good news is your own the way God still working on you what he started in your life he's going to finish. Genesis 25 Esau in Jacob were born they were twins Esau came out 1st but Jacob was Graben it is heals Jacob grew up doing everything he could to get ahead he was dishonest he went around deceiving people when his brother was hungry instead of giving him something to eat he traded Esau a pot of stew for his birthright this was significant the firstborn son

received the double portion of the family inheritance when Jacob's father Isaac was near death and couldn't see Jacob dressed up like his brother he pretended to be Esau and tricked his father into giving him the blessing that belonged to the firstborn son but when we don't do things God's way what should be a blessing is not a blessing when we deceive and manipulate we may get to where we want to be but it won't be what we thought Jacob got the blessing but for the next 21 years his life was a struggle he had to live in exile he worked for his uncle Laban to get one of his daughters for his why but Laban was a bigger trickster than Jacob he kept making excuses why he had to work longer Jacob was reaping from all those seeds that he had so. I'm sure Jacob didn't like who he was deep down he thought Look who I have become I'm a con man I'm a deceiver have 2 years he decided to go back home and make peace with Esau the night before they were going to me Jacob was camped out alone this stranger showed up and started wrestling with Jacob the man was actually an angel they wrestled all night Jacob must have known there was something special because he said the man I'm not going to let you leave until you bless me the angel looked at him and said What is your name Jacob had spent his whole life deceiving pretending years earlier when he was trying to steal his brother's blessing his father asked him the same question What is your name he said I am Esau this moment Jacob had to decide am I going to keep pretending am I going to keep wearing the mask hiding my weaknesses or am I going to be real and I can imagine this debate took place a long time in his mind he finally said to the man I am Jacob the name Jacob literally named deceiver for the 1st time he didn't try to hide his weaknesses he was honest with himself this man the angel who represents God didn't say yeah I know who you are you're a con man you should be ashamed of yourself no when Jacob took off the man's When he got real the angel said that's your all name I'm giving you a new name you are no longer Jake up now you are Israel Israel. With God. When Jacob got honest God showed him his true identity he wasn't a deceiver he was a prince at times we've all worn the man's gone around pretending trying to hide our faults but when we do like Jake when we get honest with ourselves when we're vulnerable enough to admit I am Jake I have weaknesses I'm struggling in these areas God doesn't condemn you that's when he'll give you your new name the accuser will tell you you'll never change just keep pretending keep living guilty that is not your true identity God knows who you really are your new name is waiting for you you are not Jake up you are is real you are a prince with God you are wrong you are forgiven you are ready when the accuser whispers Hey Jacob just say no thanks you have the wrong person I am is real I'm not who I used to be I am a new creation. This is a new day I'm asking us to take off the man quit pretending and let's go get our new names if you will do this leave and declare every force that's trying to stop you is being broken right now God is going to mold you into a vessel of honor in Jesus' name if you receive it can you say.