

VULNERABILITY

PREVIEW

We often hear the word “authenticity” in modern-day media. The truth is it’s hard to be authentic, because it’s easier to let others see us only when we’re at our best—when our hair looks just right, when we feel on top of the world, when we feel adequate. Showing others the side of ourselves that we are ashamed of or that we are scared of is a difficult journey. But the freedom that comes from allowing someone to see us broken cannot compare. I know it may sound illogical, but joy and peace can come from being vulnerable, both with others and with God. .

PRAISE

Bond over an embarrassment activity.

- Have the students stand in a circle and toss a ball from player to player. Each time someone receives the ball, they are to reveal an embarrassing fact about themselves. You can also ask embarrassing questions if it makes it easier, such as:

- “Have you ever picked your nose?”
- “Did you have an imaginary friend growing up?”
- “After dropping a piece of food, what’s the longest time you’ve left it on the floor and then picked it up and popped it into your mouth?”
- “Do you ever talk to yourself in the mirror?”

- Try to keep the game lighthearted and encourage others to mention if they’ve ever done the same things too.

PARABLE

I think we can all agree that we do some pretty embarrassing things from time to time. But doesn’t it feel good to see that others do embarrassing things too? Oftentimes we tend to think we’re the only person in the whole world who is cringeworthy. But no one is alone in doing cringey things. Call it a shared human experience; we all embarrass ourselves sometimes.

In a larger, more serious sense, we often are less likely to see or acknowledge that others are flawed too. For most of us, it’s easy to point out everything we see as “wrong” with ourselves and to compare that to the seemingly perfect people around us. This can cause us to build walls and barriers that shut out the world from seeing our whole, true selves. We think that in order for people to like us, to respect us, or want to be around us we need to be perfect all the time. But perfection is a draining goal that is unachievable in our world.

PRESENT

Read Matthew 12:9–13.

This story not only highlights the awesome power of God, but it also gives us an important principle. You see, Jesus never specified which hand the man should stretch forth. The man had probably suffered embarrassment because of his withered hand throughout his life. He may have kept it hidden under a long sleeve or in a fold of his garment. He certainly wouldn't want attention called to his defect in front of a crowd. The day Jesus asked to see his hand, the man could have stretched forth his good hand. But he allowed Jesus to see his vulnerability, and, as a result, Jesus healed him. That man could now walk through life as a living, breathing testimony of God's power. What was once a source of scorn was now a constant reminder of what vulnerability can do for us.

One of the most interesting concepts of this story is that the man with the withered hand had no idea that one day a disciple would write about his story in the Bible and that throughout the ages billions of people would read about his situation and be blessed by his testimony. We never know the full reach of our story or how many people our vulnerability has touched. So be encouraged. Allow others to see your brokenness. Allow them to help you and to see you as you truly are. Let others love every part of you because you never know how God is going to use that or how many people may need to hear your story.

PRACTICE

God, we ask Your forgiveness for our wrongdoing. Give us a heart like Yours so we can forgive others. We repent of any unforgiveness, bitterness, and anger that may be festering in our hearts. Help us to display mercy and love to others just as You have extended mercy and love to us. Create in us a clean heart and renew in us a right spirit (Psalm 51:10). In Jesus' name, amen.

PRAY

God, You know it's difficult for us to let others see our brokenness. You know how deep that fear runs. But God, when that fear courses through us, let Your boldness take its place. Remind us of the power You give us—not in spite of our weaknesses but because of our weaknesses. Let us show others how You took us from the depths of sin and placed us on the Rock that cannot be moved. When we hear the lies of the enemy that tell us we have to be perfect, help us to remember that Your perfections cover all of our flaws.



PLUS

As an additional topic of conversation, the group can discuss times when they've felt encouraged by seeing another's vulnerability. Discuss how they responded and how it made them feel. You can also pose the topic of how they would react if someone opened up to them about their struggles. Remind them that the same kindness they show to others is the same kindness that others are likely to show to them.