

Mary Ann Toohey

Kairos 7, February 6

Week 1: Theme: Vulnerability

Team Scripture verse

Scripture: John 13:34-35: I give you a new commandment:

Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

The following passage is from the Pre-Kairos (The Kairos Weekend Manual.)

We know that a Christian community must love one another. We can not love someone unless we are willing to become vulnerable to that person. We can't be truly loved by someone else unless we are willing to let them know us.

We all know how difficult it is for us to become vulnerable to another person.

Even in a team setting, it is difficult for us to become vulnerable to one another.

It seems risky. But vulnerability is much more risky in the prison environment, so it is doubly difficult for the resident to become vulnerable. Christian communities do not work without vulnerability. On a weekend residents are led over the distrust hurdle in the three days the community is together. This has to happen if they are to become viable members of a share and prayer group.'

During our team meetings we will have the opportunity to share with each other in a loving, and honest way.

Pastor Rick Warren, Founding Pastor of Saddleback Church writes the following:

Vulnerability is an effort to be open and honest about our weaknesses.

It's emotionally healthy. James 5:16 says, "Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you maybe healed. Wearing a mask is unhealthy. It requires enormous amounts of energy. It produces a great amount of tension and stress.

It can even produce depression.

Worrying about maintaining an image is asking for burnout.

Revealing our feelings is the beginning of healing. There are some weaknesses in our lives that won't get better until we confess them to someone.

It's spiritually empowering. James 4:6 says, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. By humbling ourselves, God gives grace to us. He delights in blessing us when we understand how weak we really are. The greater we recognize our weaknesses, the greater the Holy Spirit can help us. Vulnerability draws us closer to other people. When we're vulnerable and authentic, people gravitate toward us. Paul tells us in 1st Thessalonians 2:8 : "We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well." Paul shared his life with people. He exposed his heart to them. He didn't keep his distance. He related to people on a personal level. When you're honest, people love to be around you. People don't relate to perfection. They relate to humanity.

When we share a personal pain with the people in your church, you will discover a new level of fellowship that you have not known before. Many lonely people are afraid of being vulnerable. Vulnerability encourages others to throw away their mask. They realize it's safe to come out of hiding. If you can be honest, they can be honest. We need to let people know we're struggling with them, and we need to let them know how we're finding victory. It enhances our leadership. Vulnerability will make us more credible leaders. Every leader has weaknesses and how we handle them will determine whether they help us or hinder us as a leader. If we understand and accept our natural limitations, they become useful to us. If we ignore them, they become embarrassments.

People want to be with people who are real. The more honest we are about our weaknesses, the more we are perceived as being real.

In my own life I have found this to be true. With my family and friends, I have the joy of being known, and loved in spite of my weaknesses which are many.

I struggle daily to improve on them and to minimize offenses to others. I ask for God's help on a daily basis.

I become vulnerable when I am open to listening and learning from others.

When I live love as an authentic Christian, I am at peace with God.

When I choose my comfort over a compassionate response to someone that appears in my life, I feel the separation from God and it is unbearable. I am lovingly encouraged to come back to the tenderness of His mercy and one more time strive to Love

At home, I am vulnerable because I love and want to please my husband. Because we live together and work together as a team, there are conflicts and differences in the way we see things and do things. I work full time and have a large family and volunteer work that I am passionate about. I often need to ask for help, to admit that I can't do everything by myself or perfectly and to acknowledge my mistakes and weaknesses.

I have found letting my husband know what I need has brought us closer and enabled us to become friends as well as understand each other better.

When I am transparent he sees me as I truly am.

I am vulnerable at work, on a daily basis. I have a demanding job and am under pressure with deadlines, new challenges and responsibilities. I have to admit my mistakes and ask for help. I need my job, but I have to be upfront about my limits whether they are physical ones or otherwise. I have found that my supervisor and coworkers respect that and we have good working relationships and communication.

It is easier for me to admit I need help and don't know how to do something than to pretend I don't need help.

With my friends and family, I am open about the constraints on my personal time and energy. We have honest loving trusting relationships. They know my heartaches and struggles, my fears and weaknesses. They are there for me and I am there for them.

Recently, my husband and I lost his dear sister Rosemary to Cancer. We learned first hand how fragile life is, how quickly our lives can change. Rosemary was always open, vulnerable and honest and deeply loved by everyone who knew her.

Our Kairos friend Mike Walker died, was loved by everyone that knew him. He shared his struggles with us before his illness and after. He was a defender of the vulnerable, the unborn, and those in prison.

Recently, my husband's youngest son was diagnosed with malignant cancer and operated on. I took the risk to share with him and his wife my faith, the prayers of others for them and how faith would help her and her family, how letting others love, care and help her would be a blessing to them as well as to her and her family.

God's love for us, often comes to us through others, when we are open and honest about who we are. It then becomes the natural and Christian response that we desire and practice loving relationships with others.