



Weekly Resources for Collective Worship, Spiritual
Development and Pastoral Care

PHASE: PRIMARY

**WEEK 9 THEME:
VULNERABILITY**





KEY CONCEPT/MESSAGE:

Vulnerability is not weakness! It is not winning or losing, it is having the courage to show up, be seen when you have no control over the outcome. It is about asking for what you need, having hard conversations and talk about how you are feeling. *Brené Brown*

Christians believe, that being vulnerable means you are honest with who you are, how you feel and acknowledging the parts of yourself that you would rather keep hidden. It's not hiding behind an 'Instagram life', its about being real with God and people you meet. It is hard to be vulnerable, to feel out of control or anxious about situations. Christians are reminded throughout the Bible that God's power and grace is enough, that even in times of vulnerability, He is in control and we will not be left abandoned or alone.

BIBLE STORY OF THE WEEK:

The story of the woman who pours oil onto Jesus (Matthew 26: 6-13)



TO CONSIDER AS YOU PREPARE

KEY QUOTE OF THE WEEK: 'What makes you vulnerable makes you beautiful!' *Brené Brown*

PAUSE: Thinking about vulnerability can raise feelings or memories that might be painful. Be kind to yourself, take some time to just breathe, lean into your vulnerability, be honest with yourself and remember 'You ARE enough'.

LISTEN: If we're honest by Francesca Battistelli

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDcTvtuuVU8>

*'Truth is harder than a lie
The dark seems safer than the light
And everyone has a heart that loves to hide
I'm a mess and so are you
We've built walls nobody can get through
Yeah, it may be hard, but the best thing we could ever do, ever do
Bring your brokenness, and I'll bring mine
'Cause love can heal what hurt divides
And mercy's waiting on the other side*

*If we're honest
If we're honest
Don't pretend to be something that you're not
Living life afraid of getting caught
There is freedom found when we lay our secrets down at the cross, at the cross.'*

WATCH: Brené Brown's original TED talk on vulnerability.

https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_the_power_of_vulnerability/transcript?language=en

READ: A great article exploring Brene Brown's talk on vulnerability from a Biblical perspective.

<https://thethread.ptsem.edu/culture/vulnerable-god>

READ: This article describes the definition of vulnerability we will be exploring through this act of worship and spiritual encounters below. <https://www.veysigmund.com/vulnerability-the-key-to-close-relationships/>

Vulnerability is the driving force of connection. It's brave. It's tender. It's impossible to connect without it.

But we've turned it into a weakness.

We've made ourselves 'strong'. We've toughened up, hardened up and protected ourselves from being hurt. We've protected ourselves from vulnerability and disallowed the surrender. Here's the problem. When we close down our vulnerability we are shielded from hurt, but we are also shielded from love, intimacy and connection. They come to us through the same door. When we close it to one, we close it to all.

Without vulnerability, relationships struggle. Vulnerability is, 'Here I am – my frayed edges, my secrets, my fears, my affection. Be careful – they're precious.' In return, it invites, 'Oh, I see you there. It's okay, you're safe. And here – here's me.' It builds trust, closeness and a sense of belonging. Relationships won't thrive without it. Vulnerability is openness to experiences, people and uncertainty. It's terrifying at times, and brave always.

Karen Young

PRAY:

Lord help us know that we are known.
To accept that we are accepted.
To love ourselves as much as you do.
And as we behold your time on Calvary,
the summit of Your vulnerability.
May we have the courage to be vulnerable too.
To live a life of absolute truth towards you.
For you are the living one that sees us.
And as the 'door to our heart' opens, it frees us,
To love others, ourselves without reservation
To embrace this imperfect life, with its joy and it's pain.
Knowing well that as we behold you again,
The door swings back open by faith.
For you are the living one that sees us.
Amen

By David Tensen

(inspired by Hagar's response in Genesis 16:13)

I. COLLECTIVE WORSHIP - *Invitational, Inclusive, Inspiring.*

GATHER:

Find a place where you can be still, without interruptions. You might like to light a candle as you begin.

As you sit quietly, look at this image and reflect on what it makes you think of.



⇒ A spider's web is incredibly vulnerable, but there is beauty in the strength of its design. What if a spider never created its web out of fear of it breaking or being destroyed?

This act of worship is going to explore what vulnerable might mean. It can be difficult to understand, as people use the word vulnerable in different ways. You might have heard the term 'vulnerable people' lots in the news recently as these groups of people have had to take more care and stay in their homes for longer than others due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

We are going to think about another meaning of vulnerability – the times when we have had the courage to be honest to ourselves and others, to show love, ask for help or apologise.

ENGAGE:

The dictionary describes vulnerability as *'The emotion we experience during times of uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure.'* (– be aware that most definitions use the word weak in the definition, we are trying to break away from this stereotypes, so avoid these if you can.)

I wonder what comes to mind when you hear the word vulnerable?

I wonder if you thought of things that seem weak, like babies, baby animals, elderly people or those in danger? You are right, these people and animals may be vulnerable and need others to help them survive or live each day.

I wonder if you thought of anything else? What about a time when you had the courage to be honest with someone? Or a time when you asked a group of children if you could play with them?

Some people think you mustn't be vulnerable, as it makes you weak. But being vulnerable is actually ok, it isn't something you need to hide.

Genuine vulnerability enables you to share your emotions, be honest or say sorry when needed. It allows you to ask for help when you are struggling. This takes courage, as you will have to put yourself in a place where you might get hurt or rejected, but what would you miss out on if you didn't ever take a risk?

Look at this picture carefully, what do you notice? Who do you think the characters in the image are? How do you think they are feeling?



Share the story together:

Jesus anointed at Bethany – Matthew 26: 6-13 (NIV)

⁶ While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, ⁷ a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table.

⁸ When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. ‘Why this waste?’ they asked. ⁹ ‘This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor.’

¹⁰ Aware of this, Jesus said to them, ‘Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ¹¹ The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. ¹² When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. ¹³ Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.’

I wonder what you think about this story? I wonder which phrases or words stand out for you?

Think about the woman in the story, what did she do for Jesus?

In another version of this story, it says that the woman used her hair and tears to wash Jesus’ feet.

I wonder what this tells you about the woman and how she felt about Jesus?

The woman in the story made herself vulnerable, she did something that was different to the normal Jewish custom and culture of the time, which could have resulted in her being rejected, laughed at or thrown out of the house. (Woman in Bible times wouldn’t have taken their hair down in public, or poured huge amounts of oil on a guest. Guests usually were anointed on arrival at someone’s house with a dap of oil, but the oil that the woman used was hugely expensive and precious.)

The woman was willing to share her most precious possession with Jesus and place herself at his feet to show how much she loved and honoured him as Messiah.

I wonder how she felt when the other disciples started being unkind towards her and what she had done?

I wonder if you have ever been in a situation like this, where you have made yourself vulnerable and been told off or laughed at?

Did you say ‘I won’t be doing that again, it hurt too much.’ Or ‘Yes that hurt my feelings, but I am willing to have the courage to take a risk like that again.’

(You might want to illustrate this with images from your context, or ask children to act some scenarios out.)

I wonder if you have responded like the disciples to someone when they have made themselves vulnerable to you?

Look at what Jesus said to the disciples ... 'She has done a beautiful thing to me.'

Jesus recognised the beauty in her gift and vulnerability, he loved her for what she had done and who she was.

I wonder if we can follow the example Jesus set here, by responding in love and kindness when someone makes themselves vulnerable?

Jesus also said to his disciples that she would be remembered for what she did, in a good way. The fact that we are reading her story now, means we are remembering her for this loving and generous act.

REFLECT:

I wonder how this story makes you feel? I wonder if you find it hard to find the courage to be vulnerable?

Christians believe that God loves everyone for who they are and He will give them the courage when they ask for it. Being vulnerable means you are honest with yourself, and you don't hide behind anything or anyone.

Listen to this song called 'I am Amazing by Philippa Hanna

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVnKj0fbMiU>

Listen carefully to the lyrics.

*That I am amazing, in spite of what I can see,
When I look at myself wishing I could be anyone other than me
Cos I was created
With everything I could ever need
So I'm not gonna change
I'm gonna stay just the way God made me*

Christians believe that God created each person perfectly unique. The Bible tells Christians that God knew each person before they were born, watched as they grew and even knows how many hairs there are on each person's head! (Taken from Psalm 139) This reminds Christians that God knows everything about each person, mistakes, faults, cracks, good deeds, kind thoughts etc. So, it is ok to be vulnerable before God, because he knows and loves each person just the way they are.

I wonder what makes you amazing?

Invite – pray together

Dear God, as I journey and dance through my life ... help me;
To be vulnerable
To know that I am beautifully and wonderfully made
To have courage to be myself
To connect with others
To live a life of joy and thankfulness
To remember that I am enough and loved by you.
Amen

SEND OUT:

You are enough! You are amazing! You don't need to try and be someone you are not. Be who you are. Remember, what makes you vulnerable makes you beautiful!

I wonder if you have the courage to be vulnerable and honest with those you trust this week?

I wonder when someone makes themselves vulnerable towards you, how you might react? Like Jesus or the disciples?

Blow out your candle as a sign that your time of worship has finished.

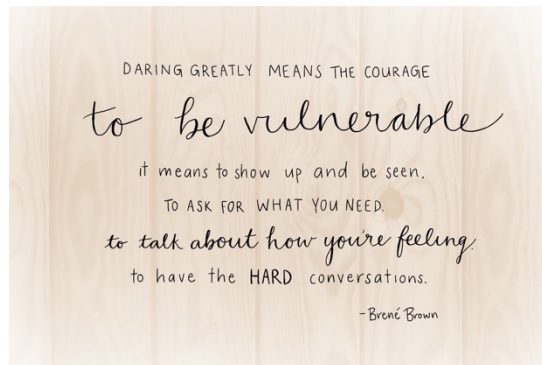
2. SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

(practical ways to help us explore faith and develop spiritually at home together)

EXPERIENCES that can help us ENCOUNTER:

Add your thoughts and reflections from this week to your journal. Below are some suggestions for you to experience and reflect on moments of vulnerability in your life.

Reflect on this statement from Brené Brown and add your thoughts to your journal.



- When have I had the courage to be vulnerable?
- When could I have been more vulnerable and honest about my feelings?
- When have I ignored difficult situations or avoided challenging conversations this week? What could I have done differently?
- What hard conversations have I had this weekend, how did they go? Did I have the courage to be vulnerable and lean into these difficult conversations?

ACTIVITIES that can help develop PRACTICES-HABITS:

Sit around the table for a meal at the end of the day. Ask the question – how are you? What has been the best part of the day and why? What has been the most difficult part of the day and why? Encourage further conversation of why something may have upset you. What was the trigger? How did you feel? What can we do as a family to support you when this happens again? You might like to bring your thoughts to God and pray together as a family. Add these prayers to your journal where each family member makes a contribution and then pray through each situation as it arises. Remember to record those answers to prayers

Reflect on the vulnerability of nature. It is often being out in the countryside, that some Christians encounter God and feel God very near to them. As a family, go out for a walk, take the camera and spend time taking photographs with a zoom lens. Take photos of the flower petals, birds and the tiny insects. For Christians, it is a reminder that God is interested in the very infinite details of their lives and he cares for every part of it.



CONVERSATIONS STARTERS that can help develop RELATIONSHIPS-COMMUNITY:

- Who do you talk to about your feelings?
- Does that feel hard or easy?
- How could I help you?
- Will you help me?
- What do you love about home?
- What makes home life tough sometimes?
- Why do you think so many people feel lonely today?
- I wonder what we could do about this?

These questions are ideal if you are doing a meal or just sitting around in groups with a drink to encourage positive conversations depending, of course, on how well people know each other.

Questions taken from a resource called 'Table Talk' www.table-talk.org

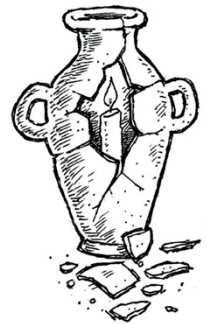
3. PASTORAL CARE - ideas for looking after...

Ourselves & Our staff

A reflection:

Treasure in Clay Jars 2 Corinthians 4: 7-9 (TPT)

⁷We are like common clay jars that carry this glorious treasure within, so that the extraordinary overflow of power will be seen as God's, not ours. ⁸Though we experience every kind of pressure, we're not crushed. At times we don't know what to do, but quitting is not an option. ⁹We are persecuted by others, but God has not forsaken us. We may be knocked down, but not out.



Clay pots are one of the most common found items during archaeological digs. They often aren't found complete, many are chipped, cracked or damaged, but there must be strength and stability in the material used to create the pot for it to survive hundreds of years under the ground.

I wonder what it is about a clay pot that helps it to withstand these pressures?

Maybe it was the choice of material, the loving care of the maker, or the protection of the soil around it?

This verse reminds Christians that despite their fragility, the treasure of God's life giving strength shines out of them filling them with hope, courage, guidance and wisdom.

As school leaders, you might be knocked down, crushed under pressure, rung out emotionally and spiritually, but look to this verse; **God has not forsaken YOU.**

For Christians they know that protection and loving care of God will help to rebuild, renew and strengthen them in these times of difficulty and trial.

'What makes you vulnerable, makes you beautiful.'

But the people who trust the Lord will become strong again. They will be able to rise up as an eagle in the sky. **They will run without needing rest. They will walk without becoming tired.**

Isaiah 40:31 (ICB)

The 'Lockdown' period has been incredibly challenging for school leaders and their staff. We need to take time to recognise this and support each other. One way of doing this is to create a school culture where all have the courage to be vulnerable with each other by feeling safe to be real, honest, confident to take risks, discuss mistakes, challenge without the fear of being ridiculed or rejected.

Encourage spending time having lunch or a cup of tea together, if that's possible. Facilitate conversations of "how are you, really?" If a session hasn't gone well for whatever reason, share it. It builds communities when staff are able to share and be vulnerable together.

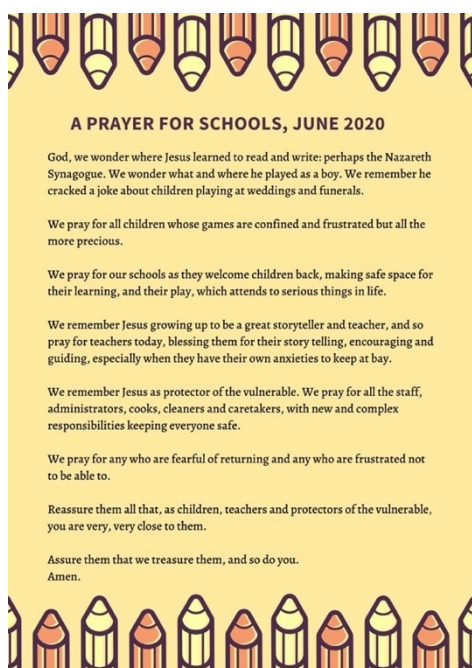
Our families & Our community

Managing the anxiety of those in our communities

'Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but empties today of its strength.'

Charles Spurgeon.

- How can we extend our culture of courageous vulnerability to our school community?
- Can we provide spaces for tough, loving conversations that help to address the issues rather than appease them?
- The anxiety these parents are demonstrating is usually linked to their past experiences. So, how as a school can we support parents through this?
- How could we listen more and ask 'What does support from us as a school look like?'
- It takes courage and trust in you for a parent to share their vulnerability with you. To strengthen this connection there needs to be mutual vulnerability. That doesn't mean you as the school leader over shares or pours your heart out, but showing empathy builds trust and deeper connection.
- How might having compassionate conversations diffuse an angry or hostile situation?
- Tell me about how you are feeling 'I get it' or 'that must have been really hard for' or 'I'm sorry for how you have been treated, or for how you feel'?
- I wonder how you support each other when dealing with anxious parents?

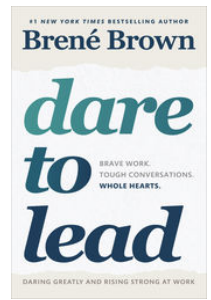


GOING DEEPER/FURTHER RESOURCES

Read: 'Dare to Lead' by Brené Brown

Explore: www.daretolead.brenebrown.com – There are lots of practical resources and advice to deepen your understanding of being a courageous leader, who creates a culture of vulnerability, trust, innovation and creativity.

Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVD8YRgA-ck> This ½ hour talk by Brené is inspirational and explains how we can create a culture of trust and vulnerability in our classrooms.



www.brenebrown.com/daringclassrooms - Brené Brown has tailored her work on leadership to an education context.

Read: How Monsters Wish to Feel by Juliette Ttofa. A book about emotional resilience.

God will use this for Good by Max Lucado

Things to pray in a Global Crisis by Rachel Jones