FOCUS YOUR SKILLS  [35 MINUTES]

Watch The Power of Vulnerability on DVD D.

I. THE POWER OF VULNERABILITY

A. Patrick’s book Getting Naked is about the power of vulnerability.

B. Patrick was most influenced by the power of vulnerability through his faith and by watching his dad, who was a very good salesman who loved his clients and would do anything for them.

C. He grew up in Bakersfield, California, which is more like Oklahoma; you just aren’t pretentious when you come from Bakersfield.

D. Patrick got out of college and got his first job at a prestigious management consulting firm, where they were taught to be anything but vulnerable.
   1. There were classes to teach the new consultants how not to answer questions honestly. When clients asked them how old they were, they would say that it’s been a while since they were out of school, even if it was just a few months.
   2. They were told never to admit that they didn’t have the right answer.
   3. They were always supposed to be smarter than their clients.
   4. Their clients didn’t like them very much and they didn’t like themselves very much.
E. So then Patrick got another job at another company, and it was like being out of the frying pan and into the fire.
   1. The firm was not known for its humility or vulnerability, and not only did they approach clients that way, but even internally they had to watch their backs.
   2. They had to always position themselves and couldn’t be honest about things.
   3. They always had to pretend they knew the right answer, because somebody was there to take them out.

F. Then Patrick got a job at another software company that was not like that.
   1. It was a smaller company, and they had to detox him and teach him that he didn’t have to be that way.
   2. Patrick was also just tired of having to constantly pretend to be someone he wasn’t, and so he finally decided he was just going to start speaking the truth a little bit more, and it was liberating.

G. A number of years later, he decided to start his own consulting firm, The Table Group, with some of his colleagues.
   1. They said when they started that they wanted to be naked with their clients.
   2. They didn’t codify it; they didn’t really know what that meant.
   3. They just knew they wanted to be totally honest with their clients.
   4. They were shocked at how the clients responded.
   5. The trust that they built with their clients, their loyalty and commitment and the way they responded, blew them away.
   6. They found that it was pretty rare.

H. Their publisher said that Patrick should write a book about this.
   1. He said no, that they didn’t write books about themselves but about their clients and leaders.
   2. They postponed for a while, but finally they decided to do it.

I. When Patrick sat down and started to write the book, he decided he really should look at the formal definition of vulnerability.
   1. He found three definitions online.
      a. The first one said “capable of being physically or emotionally wounded” and Patrick thought that made sense.
      b. The next one said “open to attack or damage” and Patrick agreed that was part of it.
      c. The third one said “liable to increased penalties but entitled to increased bonuses after winning a game in contract bridge.”
   2. Patrick doesn’t play bridge, so he didn’t really know what it meant, but he thought “liable to increased penalties but entitled to increased bonuses” is exactly what vulnerability is.

J. There are massive rewards for being vulnerable in life, but there’s no guarantee of them; there is a huge possibility of suffering as well.
   1. That’s why people do not embrace vulnerability.
   2. It runs counter to the most predominant ethic in our society today, which is to avoid suffering at all costs.
3. Vulnerability is countercultural because people encourage us to always be on, always be tough, always make yourself strong.

K. There is something just so attractive and powerful about people who are humble, and vulnerability is one of the manifestations of that.

II. THE FEAR OF LOSING THE BUSINESS

A. The first fear that prevents people from providing naked service or being a naked leader is the fear of losing the business.

B. Another way to say this is the fear of being rejected.
   1. Of course, Christ was rejected.
   2. A friend of Patrick’s has a ministry called Hard as Nails Ministry, and he says if you’re going to follow Christ, you’re going to get rejected.
   3. Rejection is something we are called to and we have to exercise our willingness to be rejected, and that is the way we’re going to draw people to us, whether they are clients, congregation members, people we are going to lead, or friends.
   4. It is only by being willing to be vulnerable and rejected.

C. One of the ways to overcome this is to enter the danger.
   1. This comes from the world of improvisational theater.
      a. Patrick’s wife was an actress, and he took an improv class with her.
      b. “Enter the danger” is one of the principles of great improvisational theater.
      c. When most people are doing improv and someone says something really wacky, their natural tendency is not to go there.
      d. They’ll wait for somebody to say something more normal, more easily adaptable.
      e. But the best improv comes from walking right into the weirdest comment and working with it.
   2. We have to do that in life as leaders and service providers as well; we have to enter the danger.
   3. Patrick was working with a famous CEO, who was intimidating and not at all vulnerable.
      a. As a result, nobody on his team ever gave him feedback; they were afraid to tell him the truth.
      b. The head of human resources convinced him to do a 360-degree feedback program.
      c. Patrick’s firm collected the feedback from the CEO’s direct reports, gave the feedback to him, and the CEO proceeded to show the results to no one.
      d. The head of human resources said he had to go over the feedback with his team because they took the time to fill it out. He agreed and reluctantly allowed Patrick to observe the meeting.
      e. The CEO stood up and said, “It says here I’m not a very good listener. What do you guys think?” They went around that table, and everyone said they thought he was a good listener.
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f. The CEO went on to the next one and said, “It says here I don’t give enough feedback, not enough praise. What do you guys think?” Again they went around the table and everyone said he gave enough praise.

g. Patrick was sitting there thinking that if he had any integrity as a consultant, this was where he’d have to be willing to lose a client. He rolled up his chair right next to the CEO and said, “Excuse me, you guys, but you’re the only people who filled this out.”

h. The CEO wasn’t too happy about that, but that client never let Patrick’s firm go. As painful as that was, they wanted somebody around who would enter the danger.

D. Another principle is to speak the kind truth.

1. John Ortberg talks about “terminal niceness” in churches, people not wanting to confront and tell the kind truth, because they don’t want to be rejected.
   a. Christ didn’t worry about that; he didn’t change what he said because people left.
   b. Sometimes we have to be rejected.
   c. Ultimately the Holy Spirit will have the right things happen, but we have to be prepared to tell the kind truth.

2. For whatever reason, Patrick’s whole career progression, before he started his own company, was based on him being the guy that people would shove in the CEO’s door and say, “You tell him.” Patrick has learned to tell the kind truth, and the word “kind” is really important because there are two kinds of people who aren’t telling the kind truth.
   a. One is the activist who goes in the CEO’s door and rants about this and that problem and how they’re a bunch of idiots.
   b. The other is the brownnoser type who says you’re always doing great and everything is wonderful.

3. Clients, leaders and people in our churches are desperate for someone who will tell them the kind truth.

4. Once Patrick and his colleague Amy were meeting with a client, a CEO of a company.
   a. The CEO was complaining and Amy finally asked him, “Do you like this job?”
   b. He was confused and she asked again, and then he started to tear up.
   c. He said no, that actually he hated this job.
   d. He quit and they lost a client.
   e. Six months later he called them back. He was at a new place and he wanted to bring them back in again.

5. Kindness comes from empathizing with them and realizing that they’re just a person just like you are.

6. You will not always get rewarded for telling the kind truth, but many times you will.

7. One of the biggest problems we have is a lot of leaders don’t like to tell the kind truth.
   a. Patrick was horrible at it; he just likes to tell people when they’re doing a good job.
   b. But leaders who don’t like to tell people the truth are wusses.
   c. Patrick is shocked at how many leaders are like that, and we have to realize it takes a lot of courage to enter the danger with people and do that.
   d. In Galatians, Paul was willing to call people out because he was a God pleaser, not a people pleaser (Galatians 1:10).
III. THE FEAR OF BEING EMBARRASSED

A. The next fear that keeps us from being vulnerable is the fear of being embarrassed.

B. When we’re serving others, we have to do things that could embarrass us.

C. We have to ask dumb questions and make suggestions that we don’t know are wise.
   1. It’s like when we were in school and we were afraid to ask a question, and then another kid asked it and was told what a good question it was.
   2. Our job as leaders is to be the one to say, “I don’t understand that,” because other people in the room will be glad you did because they didn’t understand it either.
   3. Patrick was working with a client, and they were having a meeting about their budget.
      a. Patrick was bored, and with him was a new colleague who was very professional.
      b. Patrick noticed there wasn’t anything in the budget for advertising, and so he asked if they were going to do any advertising.
      c. His colleague couldn’t believe he’d asked such a stupid question.
      d. The CEO looked at the head of marketing and asked if advertising was in there, and it wasn’t.
      e. It was a great catch.
      f. There were seven other questions that Patrick asked that weren’t great catches, but that’s OK because his job was not to look smart; his job was to help them do better.
      g. When people know that you’re more interested in helping them do better than protecting your relationship, they invite you in.
      h. When they realize you’re editing yourself to manage your own image, they don’t trust you. You don’t inspire them and you don’t build trust among them.
   4. Patrick doesn’t know anything about finance, but he was with a CEO and his chief financial officer talking about their business.
      a. They had had a good quarter and they were wondering what to do next.
      b. Patrick said, “Maybe you should go public.”
      c. He doesn’t really know why he said it; he just knew that other companies he’d worked with who were about that same size had gone public.
      d. They went public, which was a little frightening, but the point is we all have those ideas, and sometimes we just have to throw them out there.

D. Another part of overcoming the fear of being embarrassed is to celebrate your mistakes.
   1. As we get older, we don’t like to celebrate our mistakes, and yet, we all make them all the time.
   2. People say “don’t admit your mistakes” or “don’t let them see you sweat” but people see us sweating before we even know we’re sweating.
   3. Patrick’s friend, who’s also a consultant, was in a meeting and a woman passed gas, but the worst part was that she pretended it didn’t happen.
   4. When we acknowledge our humanity, it is attractive; people listen to us and they want to be around us.
   5. We are human and we are embarrassed sometimes.
IV. THE FEAR OF FEELING INFERIOR

A. The next fear that keeps us from being vulnerable is the fear of feeling inferior.

B. When it comes to providing service or leadership, the last thing we want to do is put ourselves in a lower position and have people look down upon us.

C. Taking a lower position is so powerful from a service-provider standpoint.

D. We have to do the dirty work.
   1. Patrick’s friend was selling her house, and she was working with a high-profile real estate agent who was well-known in town.
      a. His friend came out of her front door one morning and looked down and there laying in the dirt was this real estate agent.
      b. She had recently fractured her foot, so she was in a walking cast.
      c. She was lying on the ground at 6:30 in the morning, with mud all over her, planting flowers.
      d. Patrick’s friend asked what she was doing, and the realtor said she was showing the house the next day and just wanted it to look beautiful.
      e. Now his friend tells everyone who’s selling their house to call this woman.
   2. There’s just something about a person who’s willing to put themselves in a lower position.
   3. That’s not to say that if you’re the CEO of the company you should stick around every night to vacuum the floors. That’s not your job, but when it’s necessary, do it and show people that you are willing to do whatever you’re asking them to do.
   4. One of the most powerful things about going to Chick-fil-A is when a senior executive picks up your plate and throws it away for you.
   5. Of course, Jesus did this always, but the most phenomenal example is when he washed the disciples’ feet.
   6. Sometimes people aren’t going to reward you for doing the dirty work and you should do it anyway.

E. The next principle of putting yourself in a lower position and overcoming the fear of feeling inferior is honoring your client’s work.
   1. Be interested in them.
   2. It’s great when you meet somebody whom you think is important, and they’re more interested in you than you are in them.
   3. One example is a guy named Jeff Lamb from Southwest Airlines.
      a. In his office, he has pictures of all of his staff, their dogs, their kids and everybody else, because he is just completely embedded in their lives.
      b. He wants to know everything that’s going on and he takes an active interest in them, and those people would do anything for him.
   4. Patrick has a great literary agent named Jim.
      a. Jim makes everything about others, not about himself.
      b. Patrick doesn’t think that Jim has had to sell to a client in twenty years because basically anybody who’s ever worked with him sends people to him.
c. Jim is interested not just in Patrick’s literary stuff, but in his family, his life and his business.
d. He’d do anything for them.
e. Jim had a client who wrote a book, but she also started a company that sold socks for tween-age girls called Little Mismatched. They were little stripey multicolored socks that didn’t match, and you’d buy three of them at a time so if you lost one it didn’t really matter.
i. Jim and Patrick were in New York one day presenting to a publisher, and Jim crossed his legs and Patrick looked down and saw he was wearing Little Mismatched socks.
ii. He said, “Jim, what are you doing?” and Jim started telling him all about Little Mismatched socks.
iii. Patrick pointed out that they were for little girls, and Jim said he knew, but when he wears them people see them and then he gets to tell them about them and then that helps his client’s business.
iv. It’s not about him looking good; It’s about helping his clients in any way he can.

V. A CALL TO VULNERABILITY

A. Being vulnerable is attractive.
B. It breeds trust, loyalty, commitment and wonderful relationships with clients, congregation members, and friends.
C. It’s so powerful and yet it’s not easy, because we don’t come out of the womb wanting to be vulnerable.
D. It involves suffering and pain.
E. We must do this vulnerability thing even when we don’t get rewarded for it because we were called to do it.
F. We were called to be vulnerable by the most humble and vulnerable leader of all time, someone who had no reason to be humble and vulnerable but did it anyway, because he loves us that much.
G. We have to answer that call.
H. We will get rewarded for it a lot, and in those moments when we don’t get rewarded, then we need to say a prayer of thanksgiving that we do it anyway.
TAKE A BREAK  [10 MINUTES]

Relax and let it all sink in!

SURVEY YOUR SITUATION  [1 HOUR, 10 MINUTES]

- As your leadership edge is sharpened during each session, we believe the Holy Spirit is connecting with and speaking to your heart. Therefore, we have provided suggested questions for you to use as discussion starters with your team. (If you’re working through this tool on your own, you can use them for reflection and journaling.) Our hope is these questions serve God’s purposes in growing you and your team.

- If your team has more than eight people, we suggest dividing into groups of four to seven people so everyone has an opportunity to participate.

1. Share your initial reactions and thoughts about the content of this session.

2. Patrick said that despite the power of vulnerability, many of us do not embrace being vulnerable.

   a. Where on the continuum below would you place your own willingness to be vulnerable?

   b. Depending on your level of vulnerability, you might not be comfortable sharing your rating! Take a step toward increased vulnerability by talking about where you marked yourself and why you placed yourself where you did.
3. Patrick named three fears that keep us from being vulnerable: fear of losing the business (or being rejected), fear of being embarrassed, and fear of feeling inferior.

a. Rate yourself on the scale below how much you struggle with each fear.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fear of losing the business (or of being rejected)</th>
<th>I DON'T STRUGGLE MUCH WITH THIS</th>
<th>I SOMETIMES STRUGGLE WITH THIS</th>
<th>I REALLY STRUGGLE WITH THIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear of losing the business (or of being rejected)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of being embarrassed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of feeling inferior</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b. Again, risk vulnerability by sharing with your team which fear you struggle with the least and which you struggle with the most.

c. Depending on how you rated yourself, you might have some work to do to be more vulnerable. On your own, choose which fear you would like to work on, and proceed to the appropriate exercise that follows. (Each person may choose a different exercise.) When everyone is ready, share any comments you’d like to make about the exercise.
FEAR OF LOSING THE BUSINESS/BEING REJECTED:
Patrick suggested two strategies for overcoming this fear: “enter the danger” and “speak the kind truth.” Think of a recent situation in which you resisted being vulnerable. Replay the scenario in your mind, but this time, imagine that you were willing to enter the danger.

- What could you have said? (Remember Patrick’s advice to speak the kind truth.)

- What do you think might have been the result had you spoken up?

FEAR OF BEING EMBARRASSED:
Patrick suggested two strategies for overcoming this fear: “ask dumb questions” and “celebrate your mistakes.”

- Have you ever asked a dumb question that turned out to be a very wise one? Describe it below.
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- Think of a mistake you’ve made that you’ve never told anyone about. What might be the result if you shared that story? Write your thoughts below. If you feel ready, share it with your team.

FEAR OF FEELING INFERIOR:
Patrick suggested two strategies for overcoming this fear: “do the dirty work” and “honor your client’s work.”

- Think about the things that you have asked those you lead to do that you have never done. Decide on a time and place that you could show them your willingness to do the dirty work.

- Do the people you lead know you’re interested in them? Come up with at least five ideas that you could do in the next week to show your interest in those you lead. Then choose at least one of them to implement.
CHART YOUR COURSE  [5 MINUTES]

The Key Takeaways and Action Steps Chart provided in the back of this handout will help you distill the leadership lessons you’ve discussed with your team into a few key takeaways, as well as capture all of your action steps from each session in one place. Once you have completed all the sessions, use the chart to prioritize the action steps you and your team have identified and to remind you of key insights from the sessions.

1. As a team, review your notes from the discussion questions, and record your team’s key takeaways and action steps in the chart on page 155. If you have more than one action step, put them in order of priority.

2. Then, review your individual notes and add your personal key takeaways and action steps to the chart.

CONTINUE YOUR JOURNEY

If you’d like to dig deeper into the concepts explored in this session, consider these related resources:

› *Getting Naked: A Business Fable About Shedding the Three Fears that Sabotage Client Loyalty*, Patrick Lencioni  
  Available for purchase at willowcreek.com/summitresources

› *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, Patrick Lencioni  
  Available for purchase at willowcreek.com/summitresources

› Patrick Lencioni’s company, tablegroup.com

› 2011 *Summit Digital Resources: Keep Moving*, including the video “The Power of Vulnerability” with Patrick Lencioni and a link to resources from The Table Group for Summit participants  
  Available for purchase at willowcreek.com/summitresources