

RALEIGH SADLER

V U L  
N E R  
A B L E  
E

The letters are rendered in a 3D, sans-serif font. Each letter is a dark blue color and has a soft, grey shadow cast beneath it, giving the impression of objects standing on a light-colored surface. The letters are arranged in a staggered, non-linear fashion across the page.

RETHINKING  
HUMAN TRAFFICKING

This is the book about human trafficking I have been looking for. By sharing his story, Raleigh Sadler helps to demystify the issue, and provides us with keys on how we can play our part in bringing about solution. *Vulnerable: Rethinking Human Trafficking*, will challenge and inspire you to truly love your neighbor as you love yourself. A timely book for this hour.

**Christine Caine**, founder, The A21 Campaign

C. S. Lewis once described Christianity as “a fighting religion.” Those who are serious about following Christ into the world will also be serious about fighting against what is *wrong* in the world, especially where injustice and abuse are the norm. As the father of two girls, I am especially appreciative of Raleigh’s efforts in *Vulnerable*, which is a sort of roadmap for fighting for the hearts of, and fighting against the oppression of, girls and women who are potential or real victims of the sex trade. Much of the content and stories in this book are unsettling . . . and purposefully so. For when our hearts are unsettled, we are moved to action. I pray that *Vulnerable* will impact you and your community in this way.

**Scott Sauls**, senior pastor of Christ Presbyterian Church in Nashville, Tennessee, and author of *Befriend* and *Irresistible Faith*

God has called Christians to come alongside and advocate for the most marginalized in our society. Today as we speak, there are thousands in our communities who have been trafficked against their will, whose lives are not viewed as valuable, but as property for the powerful. To engage in this important work of justice, Christians must be biblical in their thinking. This book helps unpack what it means to both fight for the vulnerable and realize our own vulnerability, how in our weakness, we find the strength to step into the mission of God. I urge you to thoroughly read this book, to let it shape your approach to activism, and then pass it on to a brother or sister in Christ.

**Dan Darling**, vice president of Communications for the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission and author of *The Dignity Revolution*

I've had the immense privilege of seeing Raleigh grow from an interested bystander to a real leader in helping people understand the gravity of the global problem of human trafficking and what the average person can do to make a difference. We can feel paralyzed in the face of this immense challenge. *Vulnerable: Rethinking Human Trafficking* can help all of us find our place in helping vulnerable people find freedom, peace, and justice. I'm so encouraged to see Jesus followers helping lead the way in combatting human trafficking. Come join God in his work of entering into the broken places with the light and love of Christ.

**Kevin Palau**, president of the Luis Palau Association and author of *Unlikely: Setting Our Differences Aside to Live Out the Gospel*

The church is at its best, and is living out the redemptive realities of the gospel most fully, when it is running toward the vulnerable and broken with truth, hope, and grace, rather than remaining in safety and comfort. In *Vulnerable*, Raleigh Sadler describes with vivid clarity one of the hardest arenas of our modern world. But, like the sound guide he is, Raleigh points to where and how the church can bring the light and life of Christ.

**John Stonestreet**, president of the Chuck Colson Center for Christian Worldview and coauthor of *A Practical Guide to Culture*

Human trafficking has risen into public consciousness over the past few years even though this type of exploitation has been a global phenomenon for centuries. Trafficking is modern day slavery and is the fastest growing criminal industry in the world. The stories and statistics can be overwhelming. The Bible does not hesitate to depict the harsh reality of violence and oppression, and it clearly calls us to fight for justice and mercy for all people as God intended. But what can an ordinary person do to respond? In *Vulnerable*, Raleigh offers wisdom and hope as well as tangible responses to fight trafficking.

**Justin S. Holcomb**, Episcopal priest, seminary professor, and author

This book is both a passionate call for help and a handhold for where to start. Before reading *Vulnerable* the gap between my

everyday life and those who are being exploited seemed, if I'm honest, almost insurmountable. But Raleigh's stories invited me to walk right up to the hurting and look into their eyes—not as a hero, but as a follower of Jesus. I identified with them, I got a new grasp on trafficking—and I got a conviction that I can't look away.

**Grace Thornton**, author of *I Don't Wait Anymore*

Raleigh brings a message that all churches need to hear. Through stories and lived experience, *Vulnerable* breaks myths and focuses on what trafficking victims truly need—equipping all of us to make real a difference.

**Rebecca Bender**, survivor leader, author, and CEO

Raleigh Sadler is an extraordinarily important voice for the voiceless trapped inside of sex trafficking.

**Mac Pier**, founder and CEO of Movement.org  
and author of *A Disruptive Gospel*

Raleigh Sadler strips away our myopic view of human trafficking as an evil “out there,” far removed from our day-to-day lives. It's hidden in plain sight, anywhere there's an “exploitation of vulnerability for commercial gain.” Through candid interviews, personal stories, and examples of vulnerability, Sadler makes us aware of how humans are trafficked, and how we can help to stop it. The book is eye-opening, practical, and gospel-focused. It's radically changed my understanding of this pervasive evil, and what I can do to bring about change.

**Chad Bird**, author and speaker

Raleigh Sadler's work speaks to a new generation of Christians and carries a vital message: blessed are the vulnerable, for they will be strong.

**E. Benjamin Skinner**, author of *A Crime So Monstrous:  
Face-to-Face With Modern-Day Slavery*

This is a necessary book. At once searing, revealing, and, yes, vulnerable, it's an antidote to the paralysis that most people feel when they learn about human trafficking. Drawing lessons from the

experts and from the Scriptures, Raleigh Sadler answers the perennial question, “How can I help?” with a lucid and practical call to arms, especially for the Christian Church. The problem is not too big for us to tackle. We don’t need a police badge or training in cyber crime. We can fight human trafficking right where we live by training our eyes to see vulnerability, by educating our minds to understand its causes and consequences, by opening our hearts to care about the people suffering under its weight, and by summoning the courage to engage.

**Corban Addison**, international bestselling author  
of *A Walk Across the Sun* and *A Harvest of Thorns*

One of the greatest myths of our present age is that slavery is a thing of the past. In vivid and sometimes uncomfortable detail, Raleigh Sadler busts this myth to unveil the truth about a travesty occurring right under our noses. If you care about justice, human dignity, and the good news of Jesus Christ, then read this book post-haste. *Vulnerable* is a rousing call to confront one of the biggest human rights epidemics of the modern era that can be ignored no longer.

**Jonathan Merritt**, author of *Learning to Speak God  
from Scratch* and contributing writer for *The Atlantic*

This book achieves something rare and important: it opens our eyes, keeps the reader engaged, and empowers all of us to make a difference in our world. And Sadler does this while resisting the urge to nag or motivate people to act through guilt. By seeking Christ-like eyes, he helps us all detect invisible chains that enslave so many in our day. Instead, he centers his message on the way in which the good news of Jesus is able to open up new possibilities for ethical life in the world. I urge everyone who cares about vulnerable people among us to read this book and spread its insights.

**Jeff Mallinson**, DPhil, professor of Theology and  
Philosophy at Concordia University Irvine and author of  
*Sexy: The Quest for Erotic Virtue in Perplexing Times*

In this important and much needed book, Raleigh offers a helpful framework for understanding vulnerability—in others and in



ourselves—and how this can help us see the dark reality of so many that is often hidden in plain sight, help us to push past fear of feeling like we can't do enough, and shape our response to the difficult, overwhelming injustice that is human trafficking. As Christians, it's empowering to remember that God isn't dependent on us, but he has invited us to participate in the work he is already doing, and can use us not just in spite of but through our own vulnerability.

**Jamie D. Aten**, PhD, founder and executive director of the Humanitarian Disaster Institute at Wheaton College and author of *A Walking Disaster: What Katrina and Cancer Taught Me About Faith and Resilience*

Every day, Raleigh Sadler is helping churches move from awareness to advocacy to action in today's fight against human trafficking. In his book, *Vulnerable: Rethinking Human Trafficking*, Raleigh shares captivating stories, insightful interviews, and practical resources to help equip the church to lead in that fight. *Vulnerable* is a wake-up call to the church that slaves might be living next door or even sitting in our pews. *Vulnerable* is also a thoughtful, gospel-saturated answer to how we can demonstrate love to those most vulnerable in our communities.

**Nathan Creitz**, pastor of City Life Church, New York City

Packed with practical wisdom that flows not from human demand but from the grace of God, *Vulnerable* gives us a powerful account of how personal experience, expert knowledge, and scriptural focus shape a deep concern for justice. An urgent and highly recommended read!

**David Zahl**, founder and director of Mockingbird Ministries

Raleigh Sadler has written a book that is passionate, thoughtful, and very practical. Be ready for some deep insights and some challenges to our previous common perceptions. Read it and you will never think of vulnerability in the same way.

**Taylor Field**, pastor and director of Graffiti Community Ministries, Send Relief Missionary, New York City, and author of *Upside Down Leadership*

“God doesn’t need your good works,” says Martin Luther “but your neighbor does.” This oft-quoted saying brings to mind a radical notion—that In Christ, We are free from our own frenzied preoccupation with saving ourselves and instead are set free to love our neighbors. In his book, *Vulnerable: Rethinking Human Trafficking*, Raleigh Sadler explains that human traffickers often prey upon those most vulnerable. The practical insights offered in this book will guide you as you discover how to respond to the injustice around you while the focus on the gospel will remind you why you want to do it in the first place.

**Elyse Fitzpatrick**, author of *Finding the Love of Jesus from Genesis to Revelation*

RALEIGH SADLER



RETHINKING  
HUMAN TRAFFICKING



NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE



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Some names in this book have been changed  
to protect the identities of those in the stories.

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## FOREWORD

**R**aleigh Sadler's vulnerable." Those words jolted me to alarm. The author of this book, who had been my student years ago in seminary, had sent me a prepublication copy for review, through my office. A colleague at work sent me an electronic version of the manuscript, so I could refer to it as I travelled. The email, though, was in the midst of many other messages, and when I opened up my account on my phone waiting to disembark a plane, all I could see were the subject lines. This one was "Raleigh Sadler's vulnerable."

Anyone watching me would have seen my shoulders hunch and my left palm extend skyward, as I muttered to myself, "He's vulnerable to *what*? What does that *mean*?" It only took a second or so to realize that the subject line was about a book, Raleigh Sadler's *Vulnerable*. The plane-landing micro-emergency was over.

Many things, though, went through my mind when I read those words. After all, I have had former students serve in very austere and dangerous contexts on the mission field. The subject line easily could have meant something along the lines of, "Raleigh Sadler's vulnerable to the Ebola virus, and he is hospitalized somewhere in a remote camp" or "Raleigh Sadler's vulnerable to severe harm from malaria he picked up in a distant jungle." I've also had too many loved ones to count wreck their lives through addictions or sexual immorality and so forth. The subject line could have meant, "Raleigh Sadler's vulnerable to a recently-revealed dependence on

methamphetamines,” or “Raleigh Sadler’s vulnerable to temptation, having been caught smuggling cocaine and pornography.” Or, maybe, it could have just meant what I’ve seen many times before, a statement about psychological health. “Raleigh Sadler’s vulnerable right now; facing burnout in ministry and questioning his future.”

Thankfully, none of those things were true. As soon as I could see the rest of the subject line, I was relieved. “Ah, this is Raleigh’s new book. This is what I’ve been waiting for: a needed ministry calling Christians and others to care for those trafficked now includes a written resource, calling our consciences to serve. Raleigh Sadler has written *Vulnerable*; Raleigh Sadler is not himself vulnerable!”

It didn’t take long reading this book before I realized how wrong my sense of relief was. Raleigh Sadler is vulnerable, indeed. No, not to any of the scenarios I sketched with my imagination above. But he is indeed vulnerable—to harm, to discouragement, to sin, to the devil, and, ultimately, to death. And so am I. And so are you. That’s precisely why we need the message of this book.

Right now, as you read this, girls and boys, men and women, are being treated as property, bought and sold for slave labor, for sexual violation. Right now, as you read this, there are people, made in the image of God, who believe that their futures are hopeless, that nothing waits for them but further objectification, further violation, further violence. The situation is so horrific in its enormity that many wonder whether anything can be done at all. Many then turn, like the walkers on the road in Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan, shielding their eyes or consciences from those being ravaged. After all, to involve oneself is scary, because it means opening oneself up to risk—the risk of failure, the risk of harm to oneself, the risk even of being hurt by loving those who are imperiled.

But what seems to be the problem is also the solution. That’s the message of this book. Those in harm’s way do not need mythic superheroes. The vulnerable need to be heard by the vulnerable. We bear one another’s burdens (Gal. 6:2). That doesn’t mean that some of us don’t have burdens, and that they are the ones called to love. We all have burdens, areas of vulnerability. We shore one another

up where we are strong, and they, in turn, help us where we are weak. The oppressed and the trafficked are in need of awakened consciences and concentrated work for justice for them. They need that from real people—people who sometimes don't know exactly what to do, people who will sometimes fail, from vulnerable people.

In the struggle for justice, vulnerability does not impede us from helping the marginalized and hurting; vulnerability is necessary. The people of God in biblical Israel, after all, could love the sojourners in their land, the oppressed in the fields, precisely because they were once enslaved in the land of Egypt (Lev. 19:34). When we see ourselves as invulnerable, as self-creating gods, that's when we start to believe, wrongly, that prosperity and strength is a sign of value, and that weakness should be ignored. As Christians, our signs are not those of "power," as the world defines power.

A fish, one of the earliest emblems of Christianity, reminds us that we are bodily creatures, in need of food lest we die. And, of course, the cross points us to the fact that we are, all of us, no matter how seemingly strong, rooted in our identity in the most vulnerable circumstance possible—a crucifixion by the Roman Empire outside the gates of Jerusalem. Therein we find the wisdom of God, and the power of God, that turns upside down the "wisdom" and "power" of what the world around us celebrates and craves (1 Cor. 1:18–2:8). From that standpoint, we find the supernatural power to sacrifice ourselves for the hurting and the imperiled.

Raleigh Sadler's vulnerable. Thanks be to God. That's why he can write this book. You are vulnerable. That's why you, with the energy of God, can stand up for those who are in harm's way. This book will show you why, and prompt you to think about how.

Russell Moore, president, Ethics and Religious  
Liberty Commission and author of *Onward:  
Engaging the Culture without Losing the Gospel* and  
*The Storm-Tossed Family: How the Cross Reshapes the Home*





# **BEFORE YOU READ *VULNERABLE:* *RETHINKING HUMAN TRAFFICKING***

Some of the stories included will give intimate details of the experience of vulnerability as well as the experience of human trafficking survivors. In some cases, certain chapters will describe instances of violence and sexual assault. While these details may be difficult to read, they give an accurate depiction of the realities of human trafficking. Please take this into account as you begin reading this book.



# V IS FOR VULNERABLE: AN INTRODUCTION

**“You need to teach me how to fight!”**

**T**hose were my exact words after the unthinkable happened. I had just finished sharing about how we can fight human trafficking at a church near the Bowery in Lower Manhattan. It was Super Bowl Sunday. In my line of work, that day is generally always booked. Many believe that the Super Bowl is the largest human trafficking event of the year.<sup>1</sup> Needless to say, the pastor felt that it was a good idea to have someone speak on the issue.

Have you ever had one of those days where everything seemed to work in your favor? That was the case for me that evening. The message went off without a hitch and several people in the congregation genuinely wanted to learn more. It was a resounding success. As I left the church, I remember walking with my head held high until I saw someone who could barely keep her head up.

As I descended the steps into the subway, I saw a young woman sitting on a bench waiting for her train. I immediately noticed two things about her: 1) she was in her mid-twenties and dressed as if she had been at a nightclub; 2) she was completely inebriated. She could barely keep her head up as she waited. It was all that she could do to keep herself from falling over. I looked as if to try to

hide the fact that I was actually looking at her. *What is wrong with her?* I wondered. *She must be high.* To be honest, seeing someone intoxicated on New York City public transit is not exactly rare. But still, something was different about this woman.

Within a minute or two, the train came. As the doors opened, without warning, a young, well-dressed man in his late twenties came out of nowhere and grabbed her. It was apparent that they knew each other at some level. He yanked her arm violently, causing her to lurch forward and drop something. Out of the corner of my eye, I could tell that it was a passport. He then proceeded to violently push her onto the train, grabbing the passport as the doors closed.

And I did nothing. As the train pulled away, my senses came to me and I began realizing what had happened. This woman may have very likely been drugged. She was being taken away to “God knows where” to have “God knows what” done to her. Instantly, I was broken. I had failed. I was seen as an authority on human trafficking, and when the chips were down, I failed to respond. This overwhelming sense of grief overflowed into shame and regret. Not only had I failed to know how to respond in the moment, but I couldn’t shake the reality that I was supposed to know exactly what to do.

But the situation gets worse. This did not happen in the middle of the night on an isolated subway platform. It was 8:00 p.m. on a Sunday night. There were people everywhere . . . and no one else seemed to notice.

In what took less than three seconds, my life changed forever. I can’t be certain that it was human trafficking; however, I am certain that this woman was vulnerable and the man with her was abusing her. (Even if it was human trafficking, you’ll discover in the pages that follow that this is not what it always looks like.)

You never forget a moment like that. It’s in those moments that we have a choice to make: we can either beat ourselves up for the foreseeable future or we can make a conscious decision to never allow that to happen again on our watch.

Later that night, I called a friend who works in federal law enforcement. “You need to teach me how to fight!” Sensing the frustration in my voice, he said, “Okay, we can do that. I know a guy. But,” he said inquisitively, “is that the best thing that you could have done in that moment?”

*“Well, no. But at least it would have been something.”*

If you picked up this book, chances are that you may feel just like me. You have heard about human trafficking and you want to do something about it, but you are clueless as to where to start. Others of you may feel that you have nothing to offer, so you decide to do nothing in hopes that someone else will do something. You are looking at your life right now and thinking, *What can I do? I’m not exactly a superhero*. Fearing the alternative, still others of you are doing the first thing that pops into your mind. You are just like I was when I asked my friend to teach me how to fight—you’d rather risk doing the wrong thing than doing nothing. I understand. But what my friend was so graciously trying to teach me that night was that reacting without knowing the facts would not only have put myself in danger but also the girl that I was trying to help. So the question remains, how can ordinary people like you and me fight a global injustice like human trafficking?

## Human Trafficking 101

According to the Global Slavery Index, there are as many as 40.3 million people held in what amounts to modern-day slavery.<sup>2</sup> Cases have been reported in every country,<sup>3</sup> as well as every state in the United States.<sup>4</sup> Whether they are trafficked into the commercial sex industry, the agricultural sector, or the hospitality and service industries, each person has one thing in common: vulnerability. Someone who has power, influence, and status is exploiting someone who doesn’t.

Simply put, *human trafficking is the exploitation of vulnerability for commercial gain*. For this reason, human trafficking can happen anywhere because there are vulnerable people everywhere.



Often when it comes to vulnerability, we attempt to compartmentalize “causes.” One evening I had a conversation with an ethics professor at a Christian liberal arts school. I was excited to pick his brain about several social issues, which he was more than willing to oblige, until we came to human trafficking. As soon as he discovered that I had founded an organization focused on this particular issue, his countenance changed. He became visibly frustrated. “I don’t teach my students about human trafficking!” “Why?” I asked in bewilderment. “Because I feel like these students would rather focus on sex trafficking than other issues.” He went on to explain that he could show me girls in the city who were being forced to terminate their pregnancies, but I couldn’t show him people who were being trafficked. I paused for a moment. “They are the same people.”

As we see this global injustice through the lens of its basic common denominator, we realize that it is not a “one issue” kind of problem. Every type of complex vulnerability can feed into human trafficking. Regardless of whether someone is homeless, undocumented, LGBTQ, in the foster care system, or in the penal system, they are vulnerable to exploitation. With that said, human trafficking is a “catch-all” injustice. When you find yourself intentionally loving people, who are at the end of their rope, you will find yourself doing the work of prevention, intervention, and aftercare all at once. Truth be told, the very vulnerable person with whom you are spending time could be trafficked, may be trafficked, or has been trafficked. The only way for us to discover their story is for our story to intersect with theirs.

## A Vulnerable Definition

At this point, you have already read the word *vulnerable* or a derivative thereof several times. You are probably beginning to pick up what I’m laying down. Vulnerability at some level plays a role in the development of the exploiter and the development of those most often exploited. It’s an integral part of all that drives this commercial exploitation. Like a shark sensing blood in the water, traffickers

intentionally look for those without the protection and support that a healthy family or close community can provide. These traffickers are preying on people—like the girl I saw on the subway—who are trapped in situations beyond their control. At the core of both the problem and the solution of human trafficking is vulnerability.

For us to understand the problem of human trafficking, we not only need to focus on vulnerability, we need to understand what it means. If you were asked to define the word, what would you say? Chances are you would arrive at one of two definitions immediately. First, vulnerability can be defined as experiencing an unmet need.<sup>5</sup> This need can be material, emotional, psychological, and/or financial. Therefore, if you see someone experiencing homelessness, this particular person is vulnerable to exploitation because he or she does not have access to adequate safe housing. I think that we could all agree that someone facing this predicament would be vulnerable to a myriad of different risks.

Another common way of explaining vulnerability is to use words like *transparency* or *authenticity*. We do this naturally when we open ourselves up to those around us. Each of us has had moments when we have taken a risk and shared something painful with a close friend. You know you have because you can't shake the feeling. It's like your skin is being ripped from your bones. You know that you have opened up to someone else when you wake up with a "vulnerability hangover."<sup>6</sup> As you think back to what you said, your mind is flooded with questions: "Did I say too much? Does this person think that I'm crazy? Why didn't I just keep my mouth shut?" In reality, you were being courageous and you risked rejection to be open and transparent with another person.

For the purposes of this book, we are going to examine the underlying root of both of these popular definitions. *Merriam-Webster* defines vulnerability as being "capable of being physically or emotionally wounded; being open to attack or damage." In other words, this definition assumes that both of the definitions above are true and accurate.

You might be thinking, *But aren't we all vulnerable?* The answer is yes. There are times when each of us faces an unmet need and we are vulnerable to some form of exploitation. But for the purposes of this book, allow me to make something perfectly clear: due to a variety of factors, some people are more vulnerable than others.

Take Chris and Melissa, for example. Chris is an exhausted yet hopeful twelve-year-old boy who has been bounced from foster home to foster home in search of a forever family. Melissa has been married for three years to a loving husband with two adorable yet “busy” kids. Her husband is currently out of work, so Melissa has taken on two jobs to keep food on the table. For Melissa, the challenge of being the breadwinner and a “good mother” feels next to impossible. Both Chris and Melissa have distinct vulnerabilities, yet Chris more so given his unique situation. Knowing the difference, traffickers are intentionally looking for those who are living in the margins without protection or status. They are looking for those who are hidden in plain sight.

As you think about this, who would be those most vulnerable in your community? Would it be the person working in your favorite local restaurant, whose documentation papers are not exactly legal? Maybe it's the young man who was recently kicked out by his parents after “coming out.” Maybe it's the woman who has been in and out of prison and has found it impossible to find a job that pays a living wage so that she can better provide for herself and her family.

## A New Perspective

Because of the multifaceted nature of human trafficking, it is difficult if not impossible to write an exhaustive treatment. For this reason, you will find that many books have already been written addressing human trafficking from multiple vantage points. One author may address it from a sociological point of view, while another chooses to address the political challenges, and still others through psychological, legal, philosophical, or financial lenses. This is as it should be. Each book is written from a different angle and

will offer you fresh new ways of viewing the problem. As you read books written from different authors, this will not only give you, the reader, a more enlightened understanding of the subject matter, but will also keep you from becoming sluggish in your search for the truth about human trafficking and the most helpful way to respond.

This being the case, in *Vulnerable: Rethinking Human Trafficking*, you will be challenged to view human trafficking and vulnerability from a new, gospel-centric perspective. As I noted earlier, not only does vulnerability play a vital role in the problem of human trafficking, but it is also a vital part of the solution. This paradigm of vulnerability will be fleshed out throughout the rest of this book.

As we examine the Bible, we find that God's solution to fighting human trafficking includes enlisting his church. Yes, that church, the one that is filled to the brim with those who are simultaneously sinful and justified. Those who in Christ are both broken and whole. God isn't looking for the "perfect person" to stand against injustice. The perfect person has already addressed our injustice and is now calling us to join him.

*Jesus Christ motivates vulnerable people, like you and me, to love other vulnerable people by becoming vulnerable for us, to the point of death.* This is the overarching point of this book. So no matter who you are, what you have done or what has been done to you, you have a voice. Through his vulnerability, Christ has met you in the middle of your vulnerability and has set you free to walk with others. Like my experience in the subway, your story of vulnerability doesn't exist to simply bring you shame and to remind you of your inadequacies. On the contrary, it is the very thing that qualifies and empowers you to enter into the vulnerable stories of others.

Each of us has a story and, collectively, we are on a journey to justice. None of us have it all figured out. Thankfully, God continues to grow and shape us through the experience of our own vulnerabilities. But he doesn't stop there. By God's design, as we experience the vulnerabilities of others, we find ourselves growing exponentially. Likewise, the more we resist both our own

vulnerability and that of others, the more stagnant and insular our Christian lives will become. For this reason, each of the stories and interviews that you find in this book will reflect how our experiences of vulnerability and the vulnerability of others have shaped each one of us.

*Vulnerable: Rethinking Human Trafficking* is divided into six sections:

1. *When Vulnerability Is Exploited.* In the first section, you will discover the nature of human trafficking and how it is manifested in your community and around the world.
2. *Recognizing Vulnerability in Scripture.* Here, we will see how the thread of vulnerability is woven throughout the Bible. Regardless of where you find yourself in the Bible, you will find that God has a habit of picking the “worst” candidates to carry out his mission. So, relax. You are among friends.
3. *Recognizing the Vulnerability Around Us.* As you ponder this theme of vulnerability, you will learn how to identify those around you who traffickers may target.
4. *Recognizing Your Own Vulnerability.* There is no way to address the brokenness of your community without experiencing pain and hardship. There will always be some kind of “blow back” as you are engaging with broken people. What many of you may not be prepared for is that *as* you begin to recognize the vulnerabilities of others, you will find that your own vulnerabilities may be triggered. In this section, we will learn about how we can discover and harness the power of our own perceived weaknesses and vulnerabilities.

5. *Recognizing Your Vulnerable Mission.* God has a plan to care for those whose voices are not heard, and guess what—you are part of it. This can be frightening, as many of us feel that we can't help anyone else, because we have too many issues of our own. However, that's exactly what God is calling us to do. Though it feels counterintuitive, God challenges each of us to move forward, even though we may feel unqualified for the task ahead of us.
6. *Responding to the Vulnerability of Others.* Using what you have learned throughout the book, you will be equipped with practical tools to use as you address the needs around you.

This journey may lead you right into the middle of what you may fear the most: vulnerability. I hope you'll come along anyway, and I promise that God will meet you as you step out in faith.

## The Girl on the Train

Remember my phone call from earlier? After listening for a few moments, my friend asked me a question: "Do you know what I would have done in your situation? I would followed them at a close distance. Not too close, but close enough to have an idea of where they were going. Once they arrived somewhere, I would call 911 or 311, describe what I saw, and ask the police for a welfare check." He gave me the tools that I need to actually do something. Since that day, I have received frantic calls from friends around the country. Each time, I reassure them, encourage them, and show them that they can do something to care for that vulnerable person in front of them. Because someone was able to do the same for me.

This book has been written to help you know how you can fight human trafficking by loving those most vulnerable. Spoiler alert: You don't have to change your major or your career, you don't



have to learn Krav Maga, and you don't even have to join the police academy. You can actually do something to engage human trafficking by simply being who you were created to be.

My hope is that as you read, you will be better equipped to see the problem, to see your part in the problem, and to see how you—yes, you—can be part of the solution. Whether you are a stay-at-home parent, an account executive, a doctor, a musician, or a trauma survivor, you have a role to play. You are part of God's plan to bring freedom to those trapped in slavery. No matter where you find yourself, God is calling you to do something about it, and he has been preparing you for this your entire life.

## SECTION ONE

# WHEN VULNERABILITY IS EXPLOITED



*While human trafficking spans all demographics, there are some circumstances or vulnerabilities that lead to a higher susceptibility to victimization and human trafficking.*

—National Human Trafficking Hotline<sup>1</sup>



## CHAPTER 1

# A WAKE-UP CALL

**O**n January 3, 2012, I heard a speech that would ultimately change the trajectory of my life.

*“Together we can end human trafficking.”*

This six-word challenge was given to a crowd of more than 46,000 college students gathered at the Passion conference in downtown Atlanta. As I heard this charge, I found myself not only sitting in the nosebleed section of the Philips Arena, but also sitting in disbelief. On one hand, I felt a strong desire to “fight human trafficking,” but on the other hand, I was completely at a loss as to how to even begin to engage this issue.

It might help if I gave you a little background about myself. I was a college pastor and that’s all I ever saw myself being. I had no desire to be a senior pastor or hold any position of leadership within my denomination. I just wanted to work with college students.

This sense of calling began when I was a student at the University of Central Florida. God made it clear that he was calling me into this type of work. Working with students was basically the “end game” for me. Since God changed my life in college, I wanted to give back. I guess you could say that I was doing what I had always dreamed of doing.

That's why I was so confused. As I prayed and wrestled with those six words, I looked down the aisle at the students that I had brought with me. I was shaken. All of a sudden, everything seemed to be in flux. It was as if my eyes had been opened to something that I had been blind to my entire life. God was breaking my heart over the exploitation of people that I had never met, people whose names I may never know. In that moment, I knew deep down that God was calling me to action, but I didn't know how to respond. Or, maybe I did know how I should respond, but I feared the consequences.

Have you ever had one of those moments when you find yourself literally arguing with yourself? There was no one around, but there was still an argument. I knew in that moment that I was supposed to immediately jump on board. But I had questions, even doubts. I remember thinking, *How am I going to fight sex trafficking? I wear cardigans; I'm not going to kick down the door of a brothel.*

Because of this inner conflict, I was frustrated for the rest of my time in Atlanta. As the conference came to a close, I felt defeated. *Am I supposed to change my career? Do I need to go back to school and start over?* Let's call a spade a spade—as knowledgeable as my seminary professors were, they could not prepare me for this moment. I knew how to preach a sermon and do baptisms, but it's not like they offered any training on responding to modern-day slavery. I had no idea of what to do.

As I continued to ponder these questions over and over, I decided that even though I was scared, I still needed to do something. I needed to make a decision and move forward. So I did. I decided to will myself to stop thinking about it. I chose to suppress this calling and the questions that came with it and went about my normal life. *Chances are, I thought, this has nothing to do with God and it's just something I ate. Maybe this is all in my head.* I guess I figured that if God was really calling me to fight human trafficking, he would make it *painfully* clear.

And that he did. *Painfully* clear.

Shortly after returning to West Virginia, where I was living at the time, my life began to unravel. Now, you are probably thinking, *Well, that's a little dramatic, isn't it?* I understand. I would have been right there with you had I not been experiencing it myself. Within the span of six months, I would come face-to-face with not one, but two, life-changing wake-up calls.

## A Reality Check Times Two

The first wake-up call happened on a Saturday. I looked down at my phone to see that I had missed a phone call from my boss. Since we didn't exactly talk on a daily basis, I figured that it had to be important. I told my friends, "I think that I may be losing my job." Why else would he be calling me on a Saturday?

So, I quickly excused myself and stepped outside to call him back. The phone rang for what felt like an eternity. As he answered the call, he got to his point quickly. My "dream job" was being defunded. Due to a strategic focus shift, my employer would no longer be able to fund those working in collegiate ministry. This was the job for which I had been preparing for the majority of my adult life, and it was coming to an end. As a kid, I remember what my mother would say when we faced what felt like impossible situations: "Welp. Them's the breaks." For me, I did not like these "breaks." I was absolutely powerless to do or say anything to change my situation. Needless to say, I was facing a minor identity crisis. What would I do now? Who was I without this job?

So without a clear sense of direction, I began traveling, praying, and looking for something new. I went to churches and universities all over the country to find a place where I could land and start afresh. The process tended to go this way: emails would lead to phone calls. Phone calls to vision trips. Vision trips to interviews. I feel like I literally spoke to every employer in the continental United States. But no matter how many calls I made or trips I took, nothing seemed to materialize. I was not passionate about any of the

opportunities in front of me. It was like I was worse off than when I started.

I vividly remember coming home from one of these trips. As I rode back from a meeting with my friend Jim Drake, then a church planting catalyst in West Virginia, I checked my email. I knew immediately that something was wrong. It was in that moment that I came face-to-face with another life-altering event. As I read the following words from my friend Davin's wife, Lauren, I was paralyzed:

We received the results of Davin's CT scan yesterday, and the cancer has spread throughout his abdomen. Any future treatments (chemo, radiation, etc.) are more likely to cause discomfort than to help, so now our treatment focus is on pain management. We are meeting with some staff from Hosparus (<http://www.hosparus.org>) tonight, to help Davin decide if he wants to try to remain at home for this time of waiting or if the hospital would be better. The doc said he isn't in the business of guessing, so we don't really have a guess as to how soon God will take Davin to be with Him. For now, we wait. It is bittersweet, but we can rejoice that Davin will be free from suffering soon. Praise God for the perfect healing to come! "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." —Philippians 1:21<sup>1</sup>

I was undone. The pain you feel when you lose a loved one is unbearable. The only way I can describe it is that you feel this confluence of every type of pain imaginable. You are simultaneously processing your pain mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. But it's not just your pain that you're processing. You are actually feeling pain at the thought that your friend or loved one is experiencing pain. This mingled with the fact that you and all of those close to

you are about to face a sudden loss, whether you like it or not. Life as you know it is about to change forever.

In that moment, I realized that Davin, one of my best friends in the world, was dying, and I didn't know what to do. When confronted with his vulnerability, mine became evident to me.

Davin was one of the first people I met when I arrived at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 2003. It didn't take long for us to become friends and then roommates. Davin and I consistently challenged each other to grow closer to Christ. He was just that kind of guy. He never gave off the "holier than thou" impression; as a matter of fact, he knew he didn't have it all together. He wore that fact like a badge. He was authentic, and I respected that.

But there was more to him. Davin was a Renaissance man of sorts. The guy could do anything he put his mind to. He was the kind of guy that could fix what was wrong with his car after watching a YouTube video. One particular instance stands out in my mind. During my thirtieth birthday party, as we began to grill hamburgers, I realized "we" had forgotten the spatula. By "we," I really mean "I." Regardless, here we are at the park—raw hamburger meat, a grill, and people, but no spatula. I paced around for about ten minutes and then returned to find Davin holding a spatula. But this was no ordinary kitchen utensil. No, Davin had built it out of a few twigs and a Red Bull can! That was Davin.

I remember one evening, as he and I were talking through a struggle that I was going through, "Blessed Be Your Name" by Matt Redman came on the radio. As the song played, he focused intently on the lyrics. "Blessed be Your name on the road marked with suffering. Though there's pain in the offering, blessed be Your name." Davin stopped and looked at me and said, "This is what it's about." Even in that moment, he understood that our vulnerability and suffering pushes us to depend more on the gospel and less on ourselves. That was my friend, "MacGyver the theologian."

Following our graduation from seminary, he and I took different directions, but that didn't keep us from staying in touch. We still celebrated the big events in each other's lives. I came in for



his wedding, and he came to West Virginia for my ordination. I'll never forget that night, when Davin left the T.G.I. Friday's in Cross Lanes, West Virginia, to make his way back home. We stopped for a second. As we talked, it felt like we were never going to see each other again. I guess we both realized that we were growing up—that we were beginning to find our way. He told me that he was finally going to Idaho to serve a church. He was pursuing his dream and his calling. I remember as his car pulled out of the parking lot that things were going to be different, but that we would remain friends no matter what.

A week later, Davin called me. I could tell by the tone of his voice that this wasn't going to be one of our usual hilarious catch-up sessions. He told me that during his trip to Idaho, he had felt a mass in his abdomen. He was going to the doctor to have it checked out. I remember practically commanding him to let me know what the doctor said as soon as he knew. The news wasn't good. The doctor confirmed that it was beta cell lymphoma.

As one does when faced with cancer, he and his wife opted to begin the chemotherapy regimen immediately. Davin's dream of being a pastor had been put on hold. At this point, we all figured that this belonged to the category of "momentary afflictions." Sure, it was horrible. But this was Davin. You couldn't keep this guy down. I *knew* that God had led Davin into this season of life so that God could be glorified through his healing. I remember telling him that several times. It just made sense; he would be healed. But days turned to weeks and weeks to months with no marked improvement in his condition.

The treatments began to take their toll on his body. As he began to waste away, I noticed that the mood of our conversations began to shift. They were no longer light and jovial, but heavy and poignant. He was now talking less about "getting better" and more about "dying well." As you probably have guessed by now, this didn't sit well with me.

I'll never forget one day that I came to Louisville to spend the day with him and catch up. As we were headed to lunch, Davin

looked at me with a face marked by solemn bewilderment and simply stated, “If God decides to heal me for his glory . . . I understand that. But what if his plan is for me to die? I don’t understand that.”

I tried to respond with a deep theological answer that would satisfy his question and put him at ease. But I struggled to find the words. All I could do was point to the cross of Christ. But even as I did, there was a part of me that didn’t feel this was fair. I found my own “theology of glory” tested as I was confronted with a “theology of the cross.”<sup>2</sup>

## A Vulnerable Journey

After reading Lauren’s email, I was speechless. I pulled off the road and into a truck stop to gather my thoughts. Evidently, this was something I couldn’t suppress. It’s in moments like these when we are forced to square with the reality that we are not invincible. Death has a way of backing you into a corner and refusing to let you escape. I could not fix what was wrong with myself or what was wrong with my friend. In that moment, I truly felt helpless. I couldn’t change anything. No amount of positive thinking or encouragement was going to change this outcome. The only thing I could do was move forward and experience it. So, since I really didn’t have a choice, I decided to run headfirst into it.

I tried to pull myself together enough to drive home so that I could make plans to visit Davin one last time. However, before I could head to Louisville, I had one more thing that I needed to do. I needed to speak at a local campus ministry. At this point, I still had a job. Believe it or not, the text that I was supposed to preach on that evening was Philippians 4:13. As I pulled myself together, I read the text: “I can do all things through [Christ] who strengthens me.”

It’s almost comical as I think about it now. For me, in that moment, this verse went from being a pithy saying that you would see on a Christian T-shirt to being a promise that I needed. This was a promise that Davin needed as well.

As I spoke to the students, I was reminded that Christ is not hindered by our fears, limitations, vulnerabilities or the precarious situations in which we may find ourselves. Rather, the brokenness that we experience on a daily basis is the catalyst that drives us back to the only source of strength that will never fail.

Reflecting on this truth gave me the courage to walk into the house and face my friend. It's funny how sometimes we want to give people advice for how to process and handle grief, but when it comes to us, we always seem to be at a loss for words. Sure, we have Scripture memorized, but when it comes to applying the truth of God's Word, well, that's a different story altogether.

I had spent the entire drive to Louisville alternating between sporadic prayer and trying to think of how I was going to start the conversation with my friend. Now, the moment had arrived. As I walked into the house through the garage, I saw Davin sitting down in the living room. I sat down on the couch next to him and immediately said the first thing that came into my mind. "So how are you feeling?" *Ugh*. I thought to myself, *You idiot. Why would you say that?* But Davin being Davin just looked at me and said, "What do you mean? How am I feeling about dying?" I said, "Umm. Yeah." "Eh," he shrugged his shoulders.

The ice had been broken. Now, we were able to really start talking. For a moment, it was as if we weren't both overwhelmed by the fact that his life was coming to an end. I was actually shocked when he started to ask me about my job situation. It's amazing that though he was suffering, he thought to ask me about what was going on in my life. He was genuinely concerned. Generally, when we go through difficult life events, we become unbelievably self-focused. But he seemed to be as frustrated about my life as I was. It's almost as if the pain he was experiencing gave him more empathy for the pain of others.

The more that we talked, the more that we reflected on how God was working through what we were both experiencing. As we talked, I began reading Philippians 3:8–11:

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

The apostle Paul counted everything as loss. Unlike me in that moment, his identity was not grounded in anything that could be taken away from him. Instead, he considered his achievements as “rubbish.” *Rubbish*. If you don’t know what this word meant in the original Greek language, I encourage you to look it up. It’s a fun, if not slightly awkward, word study. Paul used this specific word to express that his worth did not reside in the sum of all his accomplishments. Paul’s life goal was to identify with Christ and his righteousness. The gospel not only saved him, it motivated him to live differently.

As we talked, I looked over at my friend, who was sitting across from me at the kitchen table, and said, “Davin, I don’t know what’s coming around the corner, but this is the time when you can glorify God.” I’m not really sure I actually knew the gravity of what I was saying in that moment, but Davin seemed to agree. Not only had his empathy been heightened, but his desire to glorify God had only grown. I would find out at Davin’s funeral that after he learned he would die, he, in a sense, welcomed death. He knew he would cease striving with sin, which now broke his heart more than ever before, because he had a newfound understanding of the price that Christ paid for it.

Over the next five days, Davin's family and I laughed together. We cried together. We sang together. We suffered together. We drew upon each other for support.

As I saw Davin embrace the reality of his death, I began to wrestle with my own sense of mortality. In an attempt to process what I was experiencing, I began reading *The Last Enemy* by Michael Wittmer. I immediately regretted this decision as I read the opening chapter:

You are going to die. Take a moment to let that sink in. You are going to die. One morning the sun will rise and you won't see it. Birds will greet the dawn and you won't hear them. Friends and family will gather to celebrate your life, and after you're buried they'll return to the church for ham and scalloped potatoes. Soon your job and favorite chair and spot on the team will be filled by someone else. The rest of the world may pause to remember—it will give you a moment of silence if you were rich or well known—but then it will carry on as it did before you arrived. "There is no remembrance of men of old," observed Solomon, "and even those who are yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow" (Eccl. 1:11). You are going to die. What a crushing, desperate thought. But unless you swallow hard and embrace it, you are not prepared to live.<sup>3</sup>

William Cowper, the eighteenth-century English hymn writer, penned these words in the hymn "God Moves in a Mysterious Way:"<sup>4</sup>

Behind a frowning providence, He hides a smiling face.

Somewhere in all of this confusion and sadness, I could see God smiling. Let's be honest, generally, people read *Chicken Soup for the Soul* or something faintly uplifting when they get down in

the dumps. They read something that is designed at some level to make them feel better about the situation in which they find themselves. Not me. Nope, I go straight for the “death book.” But oddly enough, that paragraph opened my eyes to what God was doing in my life. The harsh truth was exactly what I needed. I had to realize that, like Davin, my days were numbered as well.

Without knowing it, I had been scared to move forward. I was stuck in a type of paralysis. I wanted to be in control of my life, but I was painfully aware that I wasn’t in control of anything. At some level, I was intrigued by the thought of doing something to engage the human trafficking conversation, but I was enslaved to my own fear.

My fear manifested itself in a few clear ways. On one hand, I was afraid to die. My friend’s impending death had sent a shudder down my spine. As long as I knew, I had been afraid to die, but I chose to avoid thinking about it. On most days, I could distract myself, but Davin’s death put thoughts of my own death front and center.

I was also afraid to live. As I thought about it, I realized that the majority of my “faith journey” had consisted of me drifting from one comfortable job to the next. I was allergic to discomfort. Now don’t misunderstand me, I suffered. Yes, like everyone else, I can look back over my life and see moments of great pain. As a matter of fact, these moments have shaped me. But beneath the veneer of my Christian life, I had become a master at avoiding pain if it was at all possible. If it were up to me, I would do everything in my power to mitigate any potential suffering.

But that night, I was powerless. As I lay in bed reading *The Last Enemy*, I realized a few things about myself. I was afraid to be vulnerable. I was afraid to take risks. Honestly, I realized that up to that point, I hadn’t really been walking by faith. Sure, I thought I was, but something else entirely had taken place. I had become an expert in risk management, always taking the safest option available.

That’s when the light came on. Finally, it made sense. Davin was about to die, without ever fulfilling his dream of vocational ministry.<sup>5</sup> I still had a choice. How would I respond?

I remember what happened next like it happened yesterday. Lying on a fold-out bed in Davin's in-laws' basement, I prayed, "God, forgive me. I have been afraid to follow you. I have no idea what I am supposed to do, but I know you are in control. Show me what you want me to do. I'll follow you wherever you lead." As soon as I said, "Amen," I knew that this was a dangerous prayer. But honestly, I was exhausted. I knew in that moment I could no longer run from my calling to fight human trafficking. Yes, it was uncertain. But in the midst of the uncertainty was the God in whom I believed, calling me to follow him. I had no idea what God would do, but I was determined to stake my future plans on him.

Realizing that I had an expiration date, I chose to trust God even if the next step forced me to confront all of my fears. Two days later, Davin died.

I think that we have conditioned ourselves to avoid the inevitable reality of our own temporality. We avoid any talk whatsoever of our own limitations. Here's the truth: we are vulnerable. We will suffer and we will die. You probably won't find those words on a Hallmark greeting card, but they are, nonetheless, true.

I had come to embrace that certainty. I no longer had the strength to run from pain or fear. As my journey with Davin came to a close, I noticed that God had worked in my life through both my experience of my own weakness and Davin's battle with cancer. Little did I know it, but Davin had been modeling vulnerability the entire time. He had nothing to prove to anyone. He had no backup plan. He just lived until he died.

## Moving Ahead

Earlier I said that *vulnerability is not only part of the problem, but it's part of the solution*. This solution demands that we love those who are susceptible to exploitation because in some way all of us, no matter how guarded, are in the same boat. Davin's experience of vulnerability exposed my vulnerability. Now that my eyes were opened, I began to see how vulnerability played a role in human trafficking.

My remaining time in West Virginia went by in the blink of an eye. I had meant what I said to God. I was finally willing to follow him, even if that meant following him into an uncertain life path. So I began right where God had me.

I learned that West Virginia was one of the last remaining states in the United States without state-wide human trafficking legislation, so I did the only thing I knew to do. I went to a friend with whom I had been teaching Sunday school and asked him a bunch of questions. My friend, Jeff, happened to work as legal counsel to the state's governor.

"How can this happen? How can we be so slow to the game?"

"Raleigh, you may need to write legislation."

"Umm. Sure. Whatever. We just need to do something."

Two weeks later, he sent me a proposed bill. It was well-thought-out and similar to what had been passed in other states. "Great! This is perfect," I said. But Jeff slowed down my celebration. "For this to pass, we need people at the capitol to show support." So I began reaching out to college students around the state. And it passed! Through this experience, God gave me a passion to mobilize people to love the vulnerable and, in a way, made my uncertain calling just a little more clear. In the months to follow, reflecting on the gospel, I became increasingly aware that *Christ motivates vulnerable people to love other vulnerable people by becoming vulnerable for us.*

So, I sold everything I had and moved to New York City without any guarantee of success. This was, how do you say, a new approach for me. It's true that any time you attempt to break a lifelong pattern, you are going to experience anxiety. But I didn't just experience my own—I had to deal with the anxiety of others as well. I remember as I began the process of moving to New York, several of my pastor friends expressed their concern. "This is irresponsible, how can you do this?" "You're crazy." "Do you really think that God is calling you to do this?"

Though in the past couple of years many of my friends have called me personally to apologize, it still makes me laugh when I think about it. In a sense, they were right.



Whether we know it or not, each of us has been conditioned to protect ourselves at all costs. We do everything we can to guard our sense of status and identity. We are deathly afraid of “losing,” so we build our own fortifications and “biblical” defenses for why we are refusing to live radical, unhindered lives. Baptizing our desire for control, we use the Proverbs as proof-texts, and the Gospels and the Pauline epistles as support for our preference of always choosing the safest and most comfortable option. But at the heart of all our theological posturing lies the bitter truth that we are scared. We don’t want to suffer. We don’t want to be vulnerable.

To be frank, we are positively mortified at the thought that our standard of life lacks the permanency we crave. Essentially, we fear risking who we are and what we have. Our senses of identity depend on our being in control of our destinies. In that context, I guess that you can say that I was taking a risk. Like Davin’s vulnerability exposed my own, my journey into vulnerability was actively exposing the fears and limitations of many around me.

As a matter of fact, this move was one of the biggest risks that I had ever taken. There was no safety net or backup plan. But as I laid it all on the line and stepped out in faith, I realized that I was exactly where God wanted me to be. The moment that I hailed my first cab at the JFK Airport as a New York City resident, I knew that there would be no turning back.

I now know that God calls each of us to be a voice for those whose voice is not heard, as well as to empower those who have been disempowered to raise their own voices. But part of his calling requires us to face our fears and trust God with the results. Even as I write this, I am cringing ever so slightly. We don’t want to lose control, but for us to follow Christ, we have to give up control. I would have never known the blessing of vulnerability had I not been forced to confront my worst-case scenario. Through the painful process of acknowledging my own fears and limitations, God opened my eyes to care to see those who are vulnerable around me.