



KLIEG LIGHTS

THE BRILLIANCE OF VULNERABILITY

by Joane Rubietta

Crockpot in arms, I flew into the church 90 minutes early in my hand-me-down workout gear. My sunglasses stayed in place, even after entering the building, because I wasn't yet wearing my "face." The chili cook-off for the community lunch after the service needed our Symphonic Chili in advance—don't ask about the name; think campfire songs and musical fruit—so I planned to drop-and-run, returning later dressed for church.

Of course, while trying to slip in unnoticed and race out again like the invisible woman, or at least incognito, I met our pastor's wife at the door. She glowed in her white boat-necked sweater and her other church apparel.

What could I do but grin? And keep my dark glasses on. "This is a come-as-you-are party, right?" I said to her. She laughed sincerely and said, "I wish it were. Why don't you start the tradition?"

It's a thought. What if we decide to "come as we are" to church, in all of our un-finery? What if we just show up without the façade that masks our pain or anger or bitterness? What if church was a place where a key characteristic really was vulnerability, an openness about the true state of our souls?

Years ago, John Wesley gathered a small band of believers that met weekly for the purposes of truth and grace and growth. Wesley called these groups various names, one of which was Holy Clubs—not "clubs" in the sense that we have exclusive membership, like a country club, but in the sense of commitment to full participation. With vulnerability a primary requirement, the group members were expected to ask themselves daily and each other weekly these questions:

1. Does any sin, inward or outward, have dominion over you?
2. Do you desire to be told of your faults? Do you desire to be told of all your faults—and that plain and clear?
3. Consider! Do you desire that we should tell you whatsoever we think, whatsoever we fear, whatsoever we hear concerning you?
4. Do you desire that in doing this we should come as close as possible, that we should cut to the quick, and search your heart to the bottom?
5. Is it your desire and design to be on this and all other occasions entirely open, so as to speak everything that is in your heart, without exception, without disguise, and without reserve?

Ouch! It's one thing to give those questions a yes-or-no answer, yes being the preference. That would get us in the door. But how would it be to actually have someone ask, "What sin has dominion over you?" And then have another tell me of my faults? It would be about as fun as tetanus vaccines, and I'd be about that open and eager to put myself under the examination. But if the requirement is vulnerability, a sinner always coming in an attitude of confession, contrition, and repentance . . . that would rock the world on its axis.

Imagine being open to hearing another's listing of your faults. Imagine being in a group where people can hear you confess your darkest secret, your ugliest sin, your most horrific temptations . . . and have them love you, forgive you, and pray for you. Imagine people who cannot possibly sit in judgment upon you for all the garbage hidden in your soul's basement because they themselves have taken inventory aloud and found a reeking dumpster in their own heart.

All the darkness would evaporate as forgiveness dawned with freedom, and then what a glory would rest upon the faces of the people of God. It would shine into the world, like klieg lights over the fairgrounds.

By the way—better bring your sunglasses.

"Klieg Lights: The Brilliance of Vulnerability"

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