

Opening Question

Have you ever had a moment where you realized you were clinging to control like it was a security blanket? What if your strength doesn't come from being right, or in control, or perfectly composed, but from being real?

My Season for the Soul Story

Last Sunday, during our Season for the Soul workshop, we reached the part where we usually meditated. Now, typically, I lead the meditation. But that day, in the spirit of community, I asked, "Hey, anyone want to lead today?" A participant raised her hand. I pointed her toward the suggested meditation prompt in the workshop outline, but she had her own idea. She wanted to do it her way. Cue my inner control freak whispering, "This is not how I rehearsed!" I felt that armor tightening, that knee-jerk urge to take control. But instead, something in me softened. I said, "Okay. Go ahead."

She led us into silence and invited us to imagine someone whispering something profound to us. And the whisper I heard? "Things don't have to be done exactly how you want." Boom. Soul pierced. Chest softened. That whisper broke through the walls I didn't even realize I'd put up. I let go. And when I shared that moment with the group, it cracked everyone open. Because here's the truth: vulnerability is contagious. One person puts down their armor, and suddenly, sacred space appears.

Fierce Vulnerability: The Strength of Being Soft

Today's talk is about something countercultural: Fierce Vulnerability. Strength through softness. Courage through compassion. Being open-hearted in a world that teaches us to armor up. Let's name it: we live in a culture that rewards stoicism and punishes softness. We're told, "Don't cry. Don't show weakness. Don't let them see you sweat." So, we suit up in our emotional armor. We put on the mask, the smile, the facade. But real strength? Real strength is taking off the costume. Real strength is saying, "Here I am. This is me."

Clementa Pinckney & Barack Obama: The Power of Showing Up

Reverend Clementa Pinckney was a shining light. Pastor. Senator. Advocate. A gentle giant. He led with both strength and tenderness. In 2015, his life was taken in a racially motivated attack at Mother Emanuel Church. President Barack Obama, in delivering Pinckney's eulogy, stood before a grieving nation and paused. Then, he sang *Amazing Grace*. Not as a politician, but as a man. Soft. Real. Brave. That moment moved millions. Why? Because it was fiercely vulnerable.

When choosing fierce vulnerability, we don't just change our lives; we create a ripple of authenticity that touches everyone around us.

Let's Practice F.L.O.W.

When the world is shaking and emotions rise, try F.L.O.W. instead of freezing or fighting. Let's break it down:

- **F** - *Feel what you are feeling.* Name it. Don't judge it. Pause and breathe.
- **L** - *Let go of resistance.* You don't have to fix everything. You just must stop gripping so tightly.
- **O** - *Open to what your heart or Spirit is saying.* Ask: What is this moment teaching me?
- **W** - *Welcome the next gentle step.* One small act of love. One breath. One honest word.

Call to Action

This week, pause when you feel the armor creeping in. Breathe. Choose fierce vulnerability. Speak the truth with kindness. Ask for help. Or be gentle with yourself because every act of softness is a revolutionary act in a challenging world.

Affirmation: *I am strong enough to be soft. I am brave enough to be real. I am love in the eye of the storm."*

Blessing: May you walk through this world with an open heart. May your softness be your strength, your vulnerability your power. May you remember that you are never alone, for every act of courage echoes across the world. Go forth today, clothed in love, rooted in Spirit, fierce and tender, bold and gentle. And so, it is.