

SUMMARY

This new series opens with a picture anybody who visits the beach knows: the flag on the lifeguard stand. Double red is easy to read. A rip current is the hidden danger, and it is much harder to recognize. Relationships work the same way. Some warning signs are obvious and some are not, and staying healthy depends on learning to read them and respond appropriately. Green is healthy, safe to swim, trust and honesty going both directions. Yellow is swim with caution, real concerns worth watching and talking about, but not danger. Red means get out of the water, patterns of harm or control that are not yours to fix alone. Before going any further, it is worth naming what this series is not. It will not fix your relationships, diagnose anybody, or replace a counselor. The goal is language, understanding, and pointing toward resources.

We started by unpacking Judges 16. Samson killed a lion with his bare hands and a thousand men in battle, and on nearly every occasion he chose the wrong woman. Delilah told him exactly what she intended to do, did it, and he came back. Four times. Nothing in the story is hidden. Eventually Samson woke up like every other time and did not know that the Lord had departed from him. He had been losing strength in increments so small he never noticed the day he ran out.

MAIN TAKEAWAY

Red flags are usually not hidden, they are dismissed. When it comes to relationships, healing starts with us, not with the other person.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Some of the topics in this discussion may be personal or sensitive. **Be thoughtful about what you share, listen without judgment, and remember that it's not our job to fix each other.** Create space for people to share without feeling pressured to disclose more than they're comfortable with. If you or someone you know is in an unhealthy or unsafe relationship, please seek professional help or contact your campus pastor (first name@salty.org). If you're working through this guide on your own and need support, contact **Salty Church at office@salty.org**, and we can help connect you with someone who can help.

ICE BREAKER

What is the worst warning sign you have ever ignored? Beach flags, a check engine light, a weird smell in the fridge, low power mode on your phone?

LOOK BACK

- Have you heard these terms before: red, yellow, and green flags? Where do you usually hear people use them?
- If someone close to you read your flags this week, what color would they see?
- We talked about the ways we explain red flags away: **minimizing** "it's not that bad", **self-blame** "I could only be better", **softening** what happened "They didn't mean it", **comparing** down "Other have it worse", **spiritualizing** "God says to forgive so I'll take it", and **isolation** "No one understands." Which one do you reach for most, and what would it look like to stop this week?

LOOK UP

- Read Judges 16:4-21. Three times Delilah showed Samson who she was, and three times he came back anyway. Why do people stay in a relationship when the signs are already clear?
- Read Judges 16:15-16. Delilah frames it as love, "How can you say you love me," and then wears him down day after day. How do you tell the difference between someone asking for closeness and someone using love as leverage?
- Read verse 20 again: "he did not know that the Lord had left him." How does a person get to that point without realizing it? Have you ever felt that or been there? Why is it so easy to stop noticing what is wrong?

LOOK AHEAD

- Forgiveness is a biblical command. Proximity and trust are not. What is your reaction to that? Is there a relationship you can forgive but still need distance?
- When it comes to red flag relationships, healing starts with us, not with the other person. Which one of these will you actually do this week: **go to God** with it, **build a network of healthy people**, or **pray for healthy people** to be put in your life?

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Take one step toward your own healing. Bring the relationship to God in prayer, reach out to one healthy person you trust, and ask God to add healthy people to your life. Work on you, not on them.

RESOURCE RECOMMENDATIONS

- *The Emotionally Destructive Relationship* - Leslie Vernick
- *Is it Me? Making Sense of Your Confusing Marriage* - Natalie Hoffman
- *Adult Children of Emotionally Immature Parents* - Lindsay C. Gibson
- Making Sense of Your Worth 8 week series - visit Salty.org and look under Events