

SUMMARY

This week opened with what lifeguards teach about rip currents. You don't fight one head-on, because the danger is exhaustion, not the water. You swim parallel to shore, sideways, which feels like going nowhere, and then you come in. Knowledge is what keeps people safe, because most people get in trouble by not knowing what is happening underneath the surface. That is true of rip currents and it is true of relationships. Perspective, distance, and outside can help guide us towards safety.

We spent most of our time on two words: power and control. Power is the capacity to influence another person's choices, behavior, emotions, or access to resources. Control is using that power to restrict, direct, or override what someone decides for themselves. It can be obvious or hidden, and it shows up in the mouth of a boss, a friend, a spouse, a teacher, a parent, or a pastor. Just because you can't readily see it doesn't mean it isn't doing harm. Then we walked through Philippians 2:1-8 verse by verse with two flags, a green one for what each characteristic looks like when it's healthy and a red one for the toxic version. You cannot control and connect at the same time. The flags come with one rule: use them as a mirror, not a weapon.

MAIN TAKEAWAY

Jesus had every kind of power and refused to use it to his own advantage, instead he lifted others up.

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's the funniest thing you've ever fought way too hard against? A traffic jam, a jar lid, a group text, a toddler?

LOOK BACK

- The real danger in a rip current is exhaustion, not the water. Where in your life are you swimming hard against something and getting more tired instead of closer to shore?
- Has there been someone in your life who used their power to lift you up? What did they do?

LOOK UP

- Read Philippians 2:1-4. How does Paul want us to think of those around us? Which action in these verses is easiest for you? Which is the most challenging?
- Read Philippians 2:5-8. What does God do with his power? How can we model that in our own lives?
- Read Philippians 2:3-4 again. What does it look like to use the power you have to lift someone else up instead of yourself?

LOOK AHEAD

- Think of someone who depends on you. Would they say you use that power to lift them, or to get what you want?
- Where am I exhausted from “fighting the current”? What would swimming sideways look like, and who is one person you could tell the truth to this week?
- Jesus let people walk away. What are you afraid would happen if you did the same?

WEEKLY CHALLENGE

Read Philippians 2:1-8 each morning this week and ask God to help you use whatever power you have the way he does, to lift others up instead of yourself.

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
- TheHotline.org - Confidential support, information, and resources for crisis.