Summary of Red Flags in Relationships II

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Action Items

Evaluate relationship patterns

Use the three questions: Can I be myself? Is my no respected? Do actions match promises?

Set healthy boundaries

Limit access, communication, and personal information when someone repeatedly disrespects or harms you.

Tell a trusted adult

Report threats, violence, coercion, abuse, or unsafe relationship behavior to a trusted adult who can help protect you.

Avoid retaliating physically

Leave situations involving provocation or violence and seek adult, ministry, or legal support instead of fighting.

Seek support when needed

Talk with a trusted youth leader, mentor, pastor, counselor, or parent rather than handling harmful situations alone.

Attend the next lesson

Participate in the upcoming discussion about whether love, lust, or loneliness is influencing relationship choices.

Red Flags and Healthy Relationships

Meeting Overview

This youth teaching session continued the series **Relationship Without Regret**, focusing on the second part of the lesson about red flags. The central message was that **red flags do not become acceptable simply because you like someone, love someone, or have invested significant time in a relationship**.

The teaching applied to romantic relationships, friendships, family relationships, sibling relationships, parent-child relationships, and situationships.

The session combined biblical teaching, practical examples, audience participation, personal testimony, and safety guidance. Participants were encouraged to recognize pressure, manipulation, coercion, control, emotional harm, threats, and physical violence, while also learning how to respond with wisdom, boundaries, honesty, and appropriate support.

Topic 1: Hurt, Emotions, and Personal Identity

The session opened with a reminder that people may be hurt by others, but they do not have to let that hurt define their character or cause them to hurt someone else. Participants were encouraged to give their emotions to God honestly rather than pretending the pain does not exist. The goal is not to deny hurt, but to avoid allowing it to control behavior, identity, or future relationships.

The speaker emphasized that trusting God with emotions does not mean ignoring harmful situations. Instead, it means acknowledging the pain while choosing a healthy response. This principle was connected to family life, growing up, responsibilities at home, and the importance of developing healthy patterns early rather than waiting until unhealthy behavior becomes deeply established.

A repeated message was that one person cannot fix another person. Participants were asked to repeat the statement, **It is not my job to fix them**. Change ultimately belongs to the individual and to God; friends and partners can provide support, encouragement, truth, and prayer, but they are not responsible for forcing someone else to change.

Topic 2: Feelings Are Real, but They Are Not the Whole Picture

The speaker reviewed an earlier lesson: feelings are real and deserve attention, but they do not provide the complete picture. Someone can care about another person while still recognizing that the person's choices are unhealthy. Someone can miss another person and still need distance. Wanting parental approval does not make hurtful words true, and enjoying someone's company does not automatically make that person trustworthy.

Participants were encouraged to evaluate both emotions and evidence. The speaker compared warning signs in relationships to a phone warning that a link may be unsafe. A link may look attractive, but its appealing appearance does not

remove the warning. Similarly, attraction, compliments, emotional connection, or a long history together should not cause someone to ignore repeated disrespect, manipulation, or unsafe behavior.

The group discussed how people often justify troubling behavior because they want a relationship to work. Examples included explaining away public humiliation, disrespect, controlling behavior, and the phrase, **I was only joking**. The speaker noted that people do not always hear words only through their ears; past trauma, triggers, and toxic patterns can affect how words are received. This does not excuse harmful reactions, but it reinforces the need for sensitivity, accountability, and awareness.

Topic 3: Watch Patterns, Not Promises

Another core teaching was to watch consistent behavior rather than relying on repeated promises or apologies. Trust grows through changed actions. An apology can begin a conversation, but changed behavior is what rebuilds trust.

The group considered several questions:

- Do a person's actions support their words?
- Are they taking responsibility when they cause harm?
- Do they make meaningful changes, or do they repeat the same behavior?
- Are you constantly making excuses for them?
- Can they hear the word no without punishing, threatening, humiliating, or pressuring you?

Repeated humiliation followed by an apology still requires attention. Forgiveness may be appropriate, but forgiveness does not automatically restore trust or provide unlimited access to a person's private life. Participants were reminded that they can forgive someone while still protecting personal information, creating distance, or setting boundaries.

Topic 4: Healthy Love Does Not Require Pressure

The main point of the current lesson was that **love does not require someone to prove themselves through pressure**. Healthy love makes room for respect, honesty, truth, and a safe no. No one should have to abandon personal values to prove that they value another person.

The speaker described pressure and coercion through examples such as:

- If you really love me, send me pictures.
- If you were really my friend, you would do this.
- You cannot spend time with anyone except me.
- I thought you were more mature.
- Why are you saying no if we are really together?

These statements may be manipulation rather than love. A person who respects someone should be able to hear no without retaliating, becoming threatening, creating guilt, or using the relationship as leverage.

The group spent considerable time discussing a scenario in which someone in a long-term relationship accepts an expensive gift from an ex-partner. The discussion revealed competing emotions, including jealousy, fear, insecurity, obligation, and concerns about boundaries. The speaker used the example to show that the healthiest response is not to attack, label, or dismiss someone's feelings. Instead, partners should create a safe environment to explain their concerns honestly and discuss boundaries directly.

The broader lesson was that relationship conflicts should be approached as **both people against the problem**, rather than one person attacking the other. Fear may be present, but it should not control the response. The speaker encouraged participants to keep Christ at the center of their identity and decisions rather than allowing fear, jealousy, insecurity, or social pressure to dominate.

Topic 5: Biblical Model of Love and Boundaries

First Corinthians 13:4–7 was used as the standard for evaluating love. Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous, boastful, proud, rude, irritable, or controlling. It does not demand its own way, keep a record of wrongs, or celebrate injustice. It rejoices in truth, remains hopeful, and endures through circumstances.

The group was reminded that these qualities should shape behavior in every relationship, including relationships with ex-partners. A former romantic partner may still be a brother or sister in Christ, but that does not mean they retain the same access, communication, emotional intimacy, or privileges they had during the relationship. Boundaries are necessary to honor current commitments and prevent inappropriate closeness.

The speaker explained boundaries as decisions about what access to allow, limit, close, or lock. Sometimes a temporary period of space is necessary because someone is not emotionally ready to interact with another person in a healthy way.

Topic 6: You Can Love Someone and Still Get Help

The final major point was that loving someone does not require accepting harmful behavior or handling the situation alone. Participants are not responsible for fixing another person, forcing change, carrying all of another person's problems, or remaining available to someone who repeatedly causes harm.

Appropriate responsibilities include speaking the truth in love, offering reasonable support, trusting God, praying, encouraging healthy choices, and seeking help. The speaker stressed that the problem is not always that someone speaks up; the problem may be choosing an unsafe or unprepared person to receive sensitive information.

Participants were encouraged to identify trusted adults, mentors, pastors, counselors, parents, or youth leaders who can help. Sharing harmful circumstances with a safe person is not betrayal. It is a courageous step toward protection and support. Confidentiality may have limits when someone is at risk of hurting themselves, hurting someone else, or is being harmed.

Several key safety truths were presented:

1. If someone hurts or threatens you, tell a trusted adult who can help protect you.
2. Forgiveness does not automatically restore trust or access.
3. Honoring a parent does not require accepting an unsafe home environment.
4. An absent parent's choices do not prove that the child was unworthy of love or attention.
5. A person can be secure in Christ and still need comfort, support, and practical help.

Ephesians 5:8–13 was used to encourage participants to live as people of light, pursue goodness and truth, and expose harmful situations rather than participating in secrecy. Psalm 27:10 was also referenced to reassure those who have experienced parental abandonment that God remains present and supportive.

Topic 7: Recognizing Physical and Emotional Abuse

The speaker gave serious examples of young people hiding bruises, black eyes, busted lips, threats, and aggressive behavior. Participants were warned not to excuse violence by saying that someone is jealous because they care, angry because they love them, or aggressive because they are passionate.

The message was direct: do not ignore warning signs. If someone hits, threatens, controls, humiliates, or intimidates you, seek help. Young men were specifically encouraged not to respond to physical provocation from a girl with violence. The guidance was to leave, de-escalate, and seek adult or legal assistance rather than risk serious injury, arrest, or long-term consequences.

Decisions and Key Takeaways

- Red flags remain red even when attraction, love, fear, embarrassment, or time invested makes them difficult to acknowledge.
- Healthy relationships must allow honesty, personal values, boundaries, and a safe no.
- Actions and repeated patterns provide stronger evidence than promises alone.
- Forgiveness and continued access are separate decisions.
- Asking for help is not betrayal.
- Participants should keep Christ at the center of their identity and responses.
- A simple relationship evaluation was provided: Can I be myself and tell the truth? Is my no respected? Do their actions match their promises?

Follow-Up and Closing

The speaker announced that the next lesson will address **Love, Lust, or Loneliness: What Is Driving Your Relationship?** Participants were also reminded about available youth ministry support, life-skills sessions for older students, the ministry book club, and the availability of trained ambassadors and leaders for confidential support.