

**Red Zone**

**Theme**: Living in the danger zone (defense).

**Teaching**: In football, the term Red Zone has become something of a two-edged sword. Of course, the term speaks of that part of the field inside the opponent’s 20-yard line, when the offense is moving in for a potential score. But, while the Red Zone is a place of opportunity for the attacking offense, the Red Zone is the Danger Zone for the defensive unit trying to prevent that score. For any NFL team to be successful, their defenses must learn how to handle the pressure and danger of the Red Zone for, just as offenses must learn how to be as productive as possible inside the 20, the defenses have to be ready to stiffen to the challenge—defending the end-zone at all costs with a fierce tenacity that refuses to break down, in spite of the danger.

As we engage life, we face great seasons of opportunity. Opportunities to make a difference in the lives of others, to represent the Savior before a needy world, to bring help and hope that is desperately broken. Without doubt, we should cherish those opportunities and make the most of them. We must also recognize, however, that we spend much of our lives in the danger zone, where our spiritual defenses are honed to a sharp edge and prepared to resist our spiritual enemy and the temptations he, or our own fallen desires, may bring before us. This is the flipside of life’s Red Zone—the dangers that could disrupt our relationship with Christ and, potentially, destroy our relationships with others.

The apostle John wrote wisely of this Danger Zone when he said:

**For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. (I John 2:16)**

When facing the dangers of temptation, one of our best defenses is knowing where the attack may come from—so John gives us three primary directions of danger’s assault. The “lust of the flesh” speaks of the need to recognize the vulnerability of our own hearts. It is a vulnerability born out of our human frailty and our proneness to wander from the things of Christ. The “lust of the eyes” speaks of those things that can entice our hearts through things we see—things that can pull us toward the desirable, yet destructive things of sin. The most dangerous, however, is “the pride of life.” Ego uncontrolled tells us we deserve what we want, that the warnings of scripture and rules of life don’t apply to us, and that we should have whatever we want whenever we want it, simply because we want it. Danger, indeed.

Our best response? To remember that we do not live unto ourselves, but unto Christ—and that, ultimately, we are not only accountable to Him, but that we are at our best when we allow His Spirit and Word to guide us to safe ground when the assaults of spiritual danger arrive. When we think life is all about us, we are in the most dangerous Red Zone of all. But, when we allow ourselves to be compelled to live by and for Christ, we can withstand the pressure and the danger of life’s Red Zones.