



difference.

Your Guide

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Your Feedback...

We'd love to hear about your hopes and expectations at the beginning of this course. Please complete a feedback form for the start of the course by visiting difference.rln.global/feedback or by scanning this QR code.



Using Your Guide

Reflect

Capture key messages and your reflections

Act

Identify how to apply what you've learnt



You may want to have a notebook or your mobile to hand to jot down further notes or reflections.

Three Habits

This course explores how we can live differently in a complex and divided world by putting into practise three reconciling habits.



Listen to others' stories and see the world through their eyes.

Seek to value and understand the other and explore the limits of our own stories.

Every person is made in the image of God
(Genesis 1:26–27).

We believe that every person is made in God's image, with a unique story to tell. When we are curious enough to seek out that story, we affirm that person's innate value and we discover the limitations of our own story and perception. Curiosity transforms fear and hostility by giving voice to our uncertainties in ways which create connection and open up the space for new conversations.



Encounter others with authenticity and confidence.

Build trust with others by engaging our whole selves in honesty, humility and vulnerability.

Our encounters with others are inseparable from our relationship with Jesus (Matthew 25:31–46). Our fracture and mess can be holy ground where God is at work (2 Corinthians 12:9–11).

Being present means having the courage to bring our whole, unique selves to our encounters – our mind, body and soul. It means bringing our vulnerabilities and insecurities, as well as our convictions and strengths, into the encounter with honesty. By doing this, we begin to build deep foundations of resilient trust. On these foundations we can dare to find unexpected points of connection and to express our difference confidently.



Find hope and opportunity in the places where we long to see change.

Offer everything back to God, and allow him to lead us into forgiveness, courage and creativity.

God is making all things new (Revelation 21:5). We are new creations (2 Corinthians 5:16).

The habit of reimagining encourages us to be renewed by the Holy Spirit and to let God stretch our understanding of what is possible. It is a habit rooted in total honesty with God and openness to what he is doing, through which we become more deeply rooted in forgiveness and hope and see new possibilities.

Each session will develop these habits through:

Story

Listening to stories from the Bible and from Christians facing conflict today.

Space

Putting the habits into action.

Sanctuary

Sharing with and listening to God, seeking his guidance by the Spirit.

Why Habits?

We don't need a new 'to-do' list. Instead, we need to be transformed from the inside out. We need a new way of being – new patterns of thinking, praying, speaking and acting. We need habits which we can put into practice in all our relationships: with God, with others, with the earth and with ourselves.

Our habits matter. 45% of our daily actions are habitual¹ and neuroscientists have estimated that up to 95% of our behaviours are controlled (at least in part) by the subconscious mind.² If we can shape our habits, this can have a deep and lasting impact on our actions, thoughts and, ultimately, our character.

This is why *Difference* is a movement that centres on three habits: Be Curious; Be Present; and Reimagine. Rooted in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ and in the lived experience of expert peacemakers, these habits can transform everyday relationships. This Guide gives you space to reflect on how you explored the habits in each session, as well as some suggestions for how to practise the habits in your everyday life.

1 e.g. David T. Neal, Wendy Wood, and Jeffrey M. Quinn, 'Habits – A Repeat Performance', Duke University, 2006

2 e.g. Lakoff and Johnson 1999, in Martin 2008

1 God's Call

Bible passage

A New Creation

(2 Corinthians 5:16–21)

Reflect

We begin this journey by asking God to awaken (or re-awaken) in us the calling to be reconciled with him and to be ambassadors of that reconciliation in our relationships and communities.

We live in between the wholeness that God intended in the beginning and the ultimate restoration of all things – of heaven and earth. In the centre of this story is Jesus. Through him, God becomes fully part of our messy, everyday lives – exposed to fragility, relationships that go wrong, limitations, disappointments. In his life, death, resurrection and ascension, we see the extent to which God goes to restore relationship with us.

When we see the complexity and division in the world around us, we can feel disheartened and overwhelmed. But Jesus set for us the example for living in a fragmented world – he broke down walls of division, crossed social boundaries and challenged conventions. When we follow his example and invite God to be at work within us, we discover new ways of responding to brokenness. We can begin this process with the practical habits: Be Curious, Be Present and Reimagine.

We are called to be fully human, not superhuman – embracing the fact that we are fractured, fragile, forgiven works in progress. No one is invincible but God can work through each of us. In fact, our brokenness and our mess are the very things that will help us to be reconcilers, if we are open to allowing God to work through them. The Bible tells the stories of numerous broken, vulnerable people who become instruments of God's grace.

Act

God calls and equips us to see our relationships transformed in a conflicted world.

Be Curious_

When could I listen more?

Try being curious about other people's stories: experiment with questions like, 'Where might they be coming from?' Ask people to tell you their story; notice if your social media feed includes a range of views or only one perspective.

Be Present_

Who could I have new and better encounters with?

Try noticing who you spend time with over the course of the week and any times you avoid encounters.

Reimagine_

What am I daring to hope for and how could I live this out?

Try praying each day this week for God to renew and stretch you through this course.

Your Takeaway

Write or draw something you want to take away from this session.

2 Crossing Divides

Bible passage

The Woman at the Well

(John 4:1–30)

Reflect

We live in a world of divides: categories and labels that not only distinguish but which separate us from one another. Healthy boundaries are essential in our relationships; but barriers often reflect distrust, fear or prejudice. They stop us asking those on the other side about *their* story. This only increases distrust and distance, and we stop questioning our own assumptions. Difference becomes a cause of suspicion, rather than curiosity.

Some of these divides are of our own making, some we inherit. Consciously and unconsciously we often surround ourselves with people who think like us, dividing the world into the categories of “us” and “them”.

Jesus lived in a world of divides and power imbalances. Roman citizens had rights not afforded to anyone else. Within his own religious community, there were strict guidelines about who to meet and what to eat. Sharing a meal with non-Jews was not permitted. Jesus was continually engaging in encounters with those on the other side of all sorts of divides. He spent time with the most unlikely people – those whom society had already made up its mind about – as we see in the story of the Samaritan woman at the well.

The first step for us will be to see who our ‘Samaritans’ are. Who are the people behind our wall or across the divide?

Act

God invites us to see where fear or prejudice divide us from others and offers us opportunities to see them as he does.

Be Curious_

When could I listen more?

Try going to places outside your comfort zone e.g. a cafe in a different part of town or a church you've never been to.

Be Present_

Who could I have new and better encounters with?

Try spending some time with people you wouldn't naturally surround yourself with. Notice the parts of your story you would rather not share with them.

Reimagine_

What am I daring to hope for and how could I live this out?

Try noticing those that you don't normally notice and ask God to help you see them as he sees them.

Your Takeaway

Write or draw something you want to take away from this session.

3 Disagreeing Well

Bible passage

The Woman Who Washes Jesus' Feet

(Luke 7:36–50)

Reflect

In the face of deep disagreement, our natural instinct may be to withdraw and not to rock the boat. Or our tendency may be the opposite – to charge towards the other and deepen the rift between us.

At best, either of these responses will just keep us stuck where we are. It is only through honest, humble connection that relationships, however difficult, can reach their potential. Imagine what could happen in our world if every person involved in conflict sought to understand their enemy better.

Jesus never appears threatened by divergent views, as we see in his meeting with Simon the Pharisee and the woman who washes his feet. He is not afraid of the inevitable conflict that will arise by honouring the woman: rather he names the conflict and expresses his view with respect and through storytelling. The woman who washes Jesus' feet would have been in no doubt about the conflict that her actions would spark but finds a way to express her conviction both openly and with deep humility.

Being a reconciler is not about eradicating or ignoring difference or saying there are no moral absolutes. It is about finding ways of hearing one another, generously and honestly, in both the things we have in common and where we differ enormously. On this foundation, trust can begin to be built in the midst of even the strongest disagreement.

Act

God invites us to face conflict, knowing that it can be an opportunity for stronger relationships if handled well.

Be Curious_

When could I listen more?

Try seeking to understand something new about a person you disagree with (e.g. about their family, fears or faith).

Be Present_

Who could I have new and better encounters with?

Try having a drink with someone you find hard to hear.

Reimagine_

What am I daring to hope for and how could I live this out?

Try imagining a future that brings hope both to you and to someone you disagree with.

Your Takeaway

Write or draw something you want to take away from this session.

4 Practising Forgiveness

Bible passage

Jesus and Peter on the Beach
(John 21:1–19)

Reflect

Two words sum up our identity as Christians and as reconcilers: ‘forgiven forgivers’. God, in Jesus, has freely forgiven us and it is because we are forgiven that we are able to forgive others.

Every experience of painful relationships is different. Sometimes forgiveness feels challenging but not impossible. In other situations, forgiveness is a much longer and thornier process. In some cases, the perpetrator may be unknown or may not be alive, making closure and complete reconciliation impossible. This session provides an opportunity to explore the complexity of both forgiving and asking for forgiveness.

Despite how difficult it is (or perhaps because of it) forgiveness is a liberating, heart-expanding, game-changing opportunity for us as we seek to be reconcilers. Forgiveness does not excuse the wrong. Instead, it is powerful because we recognise a wrong has been done to us and choose to allow God to transform that destructive memory, releasing others and ourselves. But it takes courage and cannot be rushed.

We might often focus on the big moments of forgiveness but we are also invited to make forgiveness part of the daily rhythm of our lives. In the prayer Jesus taught his disciples, we are encouraged to pray for our daily bread and then to pray to be forgiven as we forgive others. Practising the three habits with ourselves and others can help us make forgiveness an integral part not only of our behaviour but of our character.

Act

God is with us in the mess and complexity of trying to put forgiveness into practice in our relationships.

Be Curious_

When could I listen more?

Try being curious about the story of someone who has hurt you and about your own feelings towards them. (You might ask, 'I wonder what's going on for them' or, 'I wonder why this made me feel like that'.)

Be Present_

Who could I have new and better encounters with?

Try being present with someone who is struggling with a hurting relationship - listening and giving your full attention.

Reimagine_

What am I daring to hope for and how could I live this out?

Try reimagining a relationship or situation where forgiveness seems unachievable. Pray for radical hope and that God would be at work.

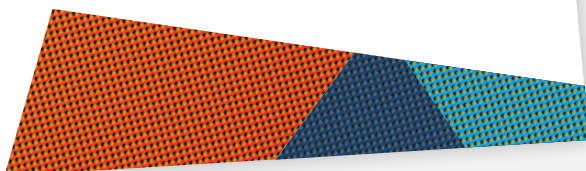
Your Takeaway

Write or draw something you want to take away from this session.

5 Risking Hope

Bible passage

Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet
(John 13:1-17)



Reflect

The kingdom of God is transformative because it is enacting something brand new which is often counter-cultural. It is a message of genuine hope because it turns broken systems of power upside down – but this doesn't always feel comfortable and sometimes meets resistance.

We know that there are times when following Jesus' example in our relationships still feels like an uphill struggle. There are situations when it is hard to be curious, when our presence doesn't seem to make a difference and when we feel we've done all the reimagining we can do. Living out God's call in our encounters is a task we invest in over time that leads us through costly, sometimes risky, territory.

But what we see in Jesus is not only that he has tread this rocky path before us but that, through it, he is bringing in new life. When Jesus washes his disciples' feet, he takes the risk that his actions and attitude won't be understood, welcomed or appreciated, at least in the short term. Yet nevertheless, he chooses to use an act of startling 'normality' to do something extraordinary. He embodies hope – through his actions and presence, he becomes a sign of God's kingdom, where power is not grasped and where relationship is sacrificial.

As we prepare for what's next, we need to know that we are called to be part of God's bigger story of restoration in the world – even when we can't see the impact. And we need to be resourced by the Holy Spirit and one another as we keep going.



We'd love to hear how you've found being a part of this course. Please complete a feedback form for the end of the course by visiting difference.rln.global/feedback or by scanning this QR code.



Act

Doing relationships God's way will sometimes be costly and risky because the hope it brings is radical and transformative.

Be Curious_

Try Try finding out what others in your community are hoping for, especially those who are very different from you.

Be Present_

Write down your group action...

Try Try finding unexpected ways of serving others.

Reimagine_

Write down your group action...

Try Try to identify one or two others who can help you reimagine when things get tough.

Your Takeaway

Write or draw something you want to take away from this session.

The Encounter Prayer

The prayer below invites God to move within us – to help us to desire and to pursue the renewal which we may feel unable to seek in our own strength. It can be prayed before or during any encounter, and in any of our relationships.

Loving God, fill me with Your Spirit now,
Help me be **curious** about others' stories –
listening as often as I speak.

Give me the **courage** to be present –
engaging my whole and unique self.

Inspire me to **reimagine** what's possible –
finding hope by glimpsing You at work.

In Jesus' name, Amen.



Join the Movement

Join a growing community of Christians who long to see their faith have an impact. You will receive ideas and inspiration for being curious, being present and reimagining and have the chance to meet with others who are practising these habits in very different contexts across the globe. It's a chance to learn from their stories and share your own, supporting the wider church to transform relationships together.

difference.rln.global

Stories & Impact

If you have any stories of how the course has had an impact in your life that you'd like to share with us, get in touch at **hello@rln.global**

Write any notes you may have here...



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