

5 Risking Hope

Doing relationships God's way will sometimes be risky and resisted, but the hope it brings is transformative.

Three key points:

- 1** Living out Jesus' gospel in our relationships is risky and costly, often disrupting the power and value systems around us.
- 2** Jesus shows us how God's creative, self-emptying power brings hope and new life like nothing else.
- 3** Not everyone will respond as we want and we are not called to fix every problem, but rather to take everyday acts of faith that join in with God's bigger picture of restoration.



Reflection

i Read this ahead of the session to prepare yourself to host the group.

The kingdom of God is transformative because it is enacting something brand new that 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 walked 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.

Session starts here

Welcome

🕒 10 mins

🖋️ 00:00

Feedback

🕒 5 mins

Ask participants to share briefly an experience they've had over the past week relating to the previous session. Have your own example to share.

Introduction

🕒 5 mins

🗨️ Tell participants:

In this session we'll explore the risk and cost of following Jesus' gospel in our relationships, and how the hope it brings is radical and transformative.

Pray

Open the session with prayer, inviting participants to bring to mind situations or relationships where they are looking for hope or courage and asking God to be at work as they explore this together.

🖥️ Slide 1





Signpost

Pursuing healed, restored relationships can be risky, costly and complex. It's easy to be overwhelmed when we struggle with forgiveness, feel powerless, or meet resistance in ourselves and others. But these aren't signs that we should give up. We can expect to encounter difficulties when we are living out a new way which interrupts the values and power structures that surround us. In Jesus we see the cost of reconciliation, but we also see how God's creative, self-emptying power brings hope like nothing else. This session is about finding ways to keep going as we try to live this out day by day.

Story

 35 mins

 00:00

Tell participants:

In this part of the session, we are going to **Be Curious** as we engage with two stories. We choose to wonder about the other person and about how God might expand our perspective.

Introduce the stories:

- We're going to hear the stories of Guvna B and Tom – Christians living in different parts of the UK.
- Then we're going to look at the biblical account of Jesus washing the disciples' feet.
- Listen out for moments in both where people practise the habits of:
 - **Being curious** Listening to others' stories and seeing the world through their eyes.
 - **Being present** Encountering others with authenticity and confidence.
 - **Reimagining** Finding hope and opportunity in the places where we long to see change.



Film

🕒 10 mins

Guvna B's and Tom's stories

1) Watch the film

2) As a group, discuss:



What do Guvna B and Tom's stories say to you about the risk and hope involved in restoration?

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🖥️ Slide 3



Bible passage

Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

(John 13: 1-17)

🕒 10 mins

Background

🗨️ 3) Share the background

- Slaves were looked down on in the ancient world. Washing feet is something a Gentile slave could be required to do, but not a Jewish slave. Foot washing is also something wives did for their husbands, children for their parents and disciples for their teachers.
- This is a fragile moment for Jesus – washing the feet of the disciples who will abandon him and Judas who will betray him, and preparing for the costly and lonely journey to the cross.
- Jesus is completely present – getting his own hands dirty and engaging up-close with the disciples' own humanity.

4) Invite a volunteer to read the passage

🖥️ Slide 4





Small groups

🕒 15 mins

5) Discuss in small groups:



What do you learn about Jesus in this story?



In the three stories, how do the habits help people risk hope?

If time allows, two or three people feedback a highlight to the whole group.

🖥️ Slide 5



Signpost

Hope isn't about wishful thinking, it's about trusting in God and acting accordingly. When Jesus washed his disciples' feet, he modelled something completely new. Peter didn't understand at first, and it didn't prevent Judas' betrayal, but Jesus still chose to serve them. Guvna B and Tom also took the risk of doing something new to bring hope in the place where they found themselves. The next activity is an opportunity to think about how we might be released to live out that hope in our own complex, everyday lives.

Space

🕒 30 mins

🖋️ 00:00



Note: In the following activity, your group will share situations where they get stuck in trying to heal divides and will resource one another to approach these situations with a fresh perspective.

■ Tell participants:

In this part of the session, we are going to **Be Present** as we engage with an activity. We become aware of ourselves, our surroundings, the people we share this space with and of God's presence with us.



Activity

Three-legged stool

🕒 20 mins

- 1 Split participants into groups of 3–4
- 2 Tell your group that you are now going to do a reflective exercise.
- 3 ■ Read the following to guide your group:

Imagine you are sitting on a three legged stool.

First, focus on the seat at the top of the stool. This represents the hopes that you hold - not your own wishful thinking, but the things you believe are possible or do because of your trust in God. What do these look like for you? Call to mind a change you are longing to see in your life, your wider community or in society (e.g. *those seen as 'outsiders' being fully welcomed into a church community / family relationships or friendships restored*).

Invite small groups to share between them what comes to mind.

- 4 ■ Read the following to the whole group:

Like our 3-legged stools, these longings for change can feel risky to lean on. We might not want to apply too much pressure for fear of losing balance, or even falling over completely. Our hopes can be rocked by resistance and opposition, both from within ourselves and outside.

- Think about where you feel resistance or opposition to the hopes you've been reflecting on (e.g. fear of getting things wrong / not being sure where to start).

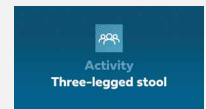
Invite participants to share aloud with the whole group what comes to mind for them.

- 5 ■ Read the following to the whole group:

Now focus on the three legs of your stool. These represent our three habits – **Be Curious**, **Be Present** and **Reimagine**. These habits can

difference.

🖥️ Slide 6



help us sustain our hopes against resistance. What difference could these habits make to the situations you and others have shared?

Invite participants to share aloud with the whole group what comes to mind for them.

6

■ Ask the group:

- What one step could you take this week to put the habits into action?

Invite small groups to share between them what comes to mind.

Group prayer

🕒 10 mins

Invite the small groups to pray for each other and the situations they have been reflecting on during the exercise.



Signpost

Throughout this course, we have seen the risks involved in seeking transformed relationships. God knows that we can't do it alone and he calls us into community with one another on this journey. Before his ascension, Jesus promises us the Holy Spirit to empower and encourage us. We are not able or called to fix every problem we encounter, and we cannot control how things turn out. God instead calls us to dare to act in hope in the present moment, knowing that this is part of God's much bigger story of restoration.

Sanctuary

🕒 10 mins



Note: Reading each of the reflections that follow, guide this time of prayer in whatever way works best for your group. For silent prayer, we suggest leaving one minute of silence between each paragraph to allow people to pray.

difference.

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Session 5 _7

■ Tell participants:

In this part of the session, we are going to **Reimagine**, noticing where we are most in need of renewed hope.

As we pray, we invite the Holy Spirit to expand our imaginations of what is possible, as individuals and as a community.



Prayer

Offering our story to God

As we come to the end of the course, we know that the risk and cost of following Jesus in our relationships are real. But we are part of an even bigger reality in which God is making all things new.

Think back to Guvna B's and Tom's stories. Bring before God the brokenness you see in communities you are part of. Ask God for curiosity about how you could bring hope in those places.

Think back to the story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. Ask God for the courage to **Be Present** even when others don't respond as we hope or expect.

Think about the stories of risk and hope we have heard and shared throughout these sessions. Ask God for people who can come alongside you to help you keep **Reimagining**.

Loving God, fill us with your Spirit now,

Help us to **Be Curious** about others' stories –
listening as often as we speak.

Give us the courage to **Be Present** – engaging our
whole and unique selves.

Inspire us to **Reimagine** what's possible – finding
hope by glimpsing you at work.

In Jesus' name. Amen.



Top Takeaway

Invite one or two people to share a one-line takeaway from the session or something they feel inspired to do next.

Application

🕒 5 mins

🖋️ 00:00

Suggested actions for your group:

1

Be Curious

about how God could use you to bring hope to your context.
What do you need to be able to take a first step?

2

Be Present

Set aside some time to be with people who would help you keep going in a difficult situation.

3

Reimagine

the ways in which your top takeaways from this course could have a wider impact – in your community and across God's world.



Remind participants to make notes in their **Guide** following the session, perhaps writing or drawing something they want to take away from this session and what they want to do in their daily lives as a result.

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Heads up

Re-Gathering

If you have planned a Re-Gathering, provide details of the time and place and to confirm that people can make it.



Feedback

At the end of the final session, please encourage your group to complete a participants' feedback form at the end of the course by visiting **difference.rln.global/feedback** or by scanning the QR code in their **Guide**. If anyone would prefer to fill in a paper version, please provide them with one of the forms available for download in the host login area.



Please also complete the hosts' version of the feedback form available in the same location.

End

Write any notes you may have here...