



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

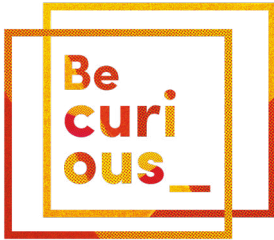
Identify how to apply what you've learnt.



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

Three Habits

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



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

In Genesis 1 we read that every person is made in the image of God with value and a unique story of deep worth. When we are **curious** enough to seek out that story, we affirm that person's innate value.

Demonstrating a true interest in who the other person is and how they have experienced the world can make it possible to begin to tread trickier territory together, because the other person knows they have been heard and honoured.

Curiosity about the other also leads us to discover some of the limitations of our own story and perception. It cultivates humility, acknowledging that we don't have all the answers without diminishing the value of what we bring.



Encounter others with authenticity and confidence.

Our encounters with others are often the places we first notice complexity, division and difference, and they are the focus of so many of Jesus' teachings. Being **present** in encounters means showing up and sticking around - making time for the other, dedicating our attention to them and meeting them as they are.

The Christian faith teaches that God became human and chose to be part of a hurting world. God's response to injustice and hurt is to step into the context in a totally new way, teaching us what it means to be present.

Being present is about how we show up, not just the act of showing up. It means having the courage to bring our whole, unique selves, not just the version of ourselves we want others to see. Bringing our vulnerabilities and insecurities, as well as our convictions and our strengths, into our encounters can open up new depths of relationship.



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

Our worlds are shaped by our imagination, and when divisions and conflict seem intractable and we face repeated disappointment, it can sometimes be hard to find hope or to imagine an alternative where healing, restoration and thriving relationships are possible.

Yet we read in Revelation 21 that God is making all things new. The habit of **reimagining** encourages us to be renewed by the Holy Spirit and for God to stretch our understanding of what is possible. It is rarely a solo experience and often done in community. For relationships to be restored, the systems and structures with which we are familiar may need to shift in new and reimagined ways.

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 Holy 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 that 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.

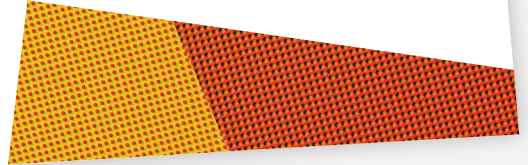
1 e.g. David T. Neal, Wendy Wood, and Jeffrey M. Quinn, 'Habits – A Repeat Performance', Duke University, 2006

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

1 God's Call

Bible passage

The Beatitudes
(Matthew 5:5-9)



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, earthy lives – exposed to fragility, relationships that go wrong, limitations and disappointments. In his life, death, resurrection and ascension, we see the extent to which God goes to restore our relationship with him.

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 can transform relationships in a conflicted world. God's call and equipping make that possible.

Be Curious_

When could I listen more?

Try being curious about other people's stories: try saying, 'Would you mind if I asked about your story?'

Be Present_

Who could I have new and better encounters with?

Try reading the Bible with people from different backgrounds or with different experiences from your own. What new connections and understanding do you discover?

Reimagine_

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

Try praying for the Holy Spirit to give you eyes to see and ears to hear more than what you currently imagine is possible.

Your Top 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 walls we put up due to prejudice or assumptions can prevent us from asking those on the other side about their story. This only increases distrust and distance, and we stop questioning our own assumptions. Differences can then become 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 identify the walls we create and the people on the other side.

Act

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

Be Curious_

When could I listen more?

Try understanding more about an area of division you don't know much about. The least impacted by a division, injustice or hurt are often the least aware it exists.

Be Present_

Who could I have new and better encounters with?

Try visiting somewhere you wouldn't normally choose to go e.g. a church with a different tradition of worship, or a cafe in a different part of town.

Reimagine_

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

Try considering the possibility that someone unlikely could become a friend.

Your Top Takeaway

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

3 Navigating Disagreement

Bible passage

The Woman Who Washes Jesus' Feet

(Luke 7:36–50)

Reflect

In the face of 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 only see the rift.

At best, either of these responses will just keep us stuck where we are. But imagine what could happen in our world if every person involved in conflict sought to understand their enemy better.

Jesus isn't 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 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 she 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 is with us as we face the challenge of disagreement, which can become an opportunity for stronger relationships if handled well.

Be Curious_

When could I listen more?

Try seeking to understand something new about a person or an opinion you disagree with.

Be Present_

Who could I have new and better encounters with?

Try noticing your physical responses in disagreements. How could your body language show an openness to the other person?

Reimagine_

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

Try looking to strengthen your relationship with someone you disagree with when you next encounter them, rather than to win the argument.

Your Top 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 ourselves and others. But it takes courage, hope and grace, and it 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 seeking God's presence in places or relationships where there is pain or injustice.

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 hope and that God would be at work.

Your Top 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 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.



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 risky and resisted but the hope it brings is radical and transformative.

Be Curious_

Try being 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?

Be Present_

Write down your group action...

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

Reimagine_

Write down your group action...

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

Your Top 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 that 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 to **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.

Stay Connected

Sign up to our mailing list and follow us on social media to receive inspiration for being **curious**, being **present** and **reimagining** in your everyday life, as well as the latest news about what we're up to and how you can get involved.

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📷 [difference.rln](https://www.instagram.com/difference.rln)

🐦 [@DifferenceRLN](https://twitter.com/DifferenceRLN)

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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