



difference.

Your Guide

Prisons

Contents

Using Your Guide	3
Habits and Session Structure	4
1. God's Call	10
2. Crossing Divides	16
3. Navigating Disagreement	22
4. Practising Forgiveness	28
5. Risking Hope	34
The Encounter Prayer	40
Share your story	41

Using Your Guide

Welcome to the *Difference* course. This Guide is designed to help you prepare, process your thoughts, and think through your ideas and actions. Use this Guide before, during and after each session:

Before

Read a summary of the session theme to help you prepare for the session.

After

Record your Top Takeaway and actions for the week ahead.

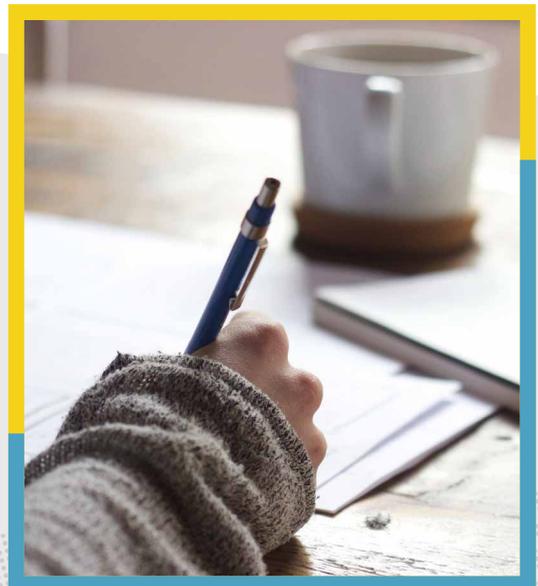
During

Remind yourself of discussion questions, instructions for activities and things to pray about. There's also space to write or draw your ideas and responses in the session.

Aim

The aim of the course is to explore what it means to follow Jesus in a complex and divided world. *Difference* equips you to cross divides, navigate disagreement and pursue a flourishing world where wrongs are made right.

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Difference teaches three Habits

Drawing deeply on Jesus' encounters in the Gospels and the wisdom of expert peacemakers, we've distilled three habits that can transform everyday relationships.

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

There is a close relationship between what we believe and what we do. If we can shape our habits we can build practices that have a deep and lasting impact on our actions, our thoughts and our character.

Let's take a closer look at the three habits: **Be Curious, Be Present** and **Reimagine**.

These habits aren't a three point plan where one habit follows another. There is no correct order in which to practise them and each habit feeds into the others. When we learn to recognise these habits in action, we often notice that they're being practised simultaneously.

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

The Three Habits

Be
curi
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Be
pres
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Re
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differ
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differ
ence.

Be
curi
ous_

listen

to understand

pray

for those who
we tend to turn
away from

Moving...

...away from

Assumptions
Ignorance

...towards

→ Wonder
→ Valuing others



“Reconciliation is not the ending of all difference, but the transformation of how we deal with difference.”

Archbishop Justin Welby

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

Everyone is made in God's image:

“God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

Genesis 1:27





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**Be
pres
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listen

by giving our full attention

pray

in lament for the reality of pain and fracture

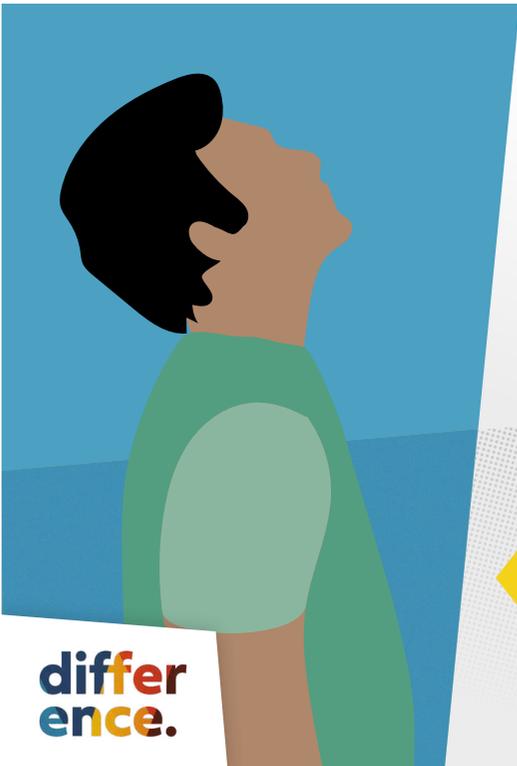
Moving...

...away from

Distance
Avoidance

...towards

→ Hospitality
→ Understanding



**differ
ence.**

**Re
ima
gine_**

listen

to where God is leading us

pray

for God's perspective and renewal

Moving...

...away from

Self-sufficiency
Hopelessness

...towards

→ Community
→ Creativity, courage and renewal





Encounter others with authenticity and confidence.

How we treat others matters when we follow Jesus:

"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

Matthew 25:40



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

We are a new creation:

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!"

2 Corinthians 5:17



Session structure

Each session will develop these habits through:

Story

Stories matter, so we start with a section called **Story**. In this part of the session, we are going to learn to Be Curious as we engage with two stories. This includes a film of someone who has faced conflict, division or a difficult relationship, and a Gospel account from the life of Jesus. Both stories relate to the theme of the session, approaching it from different angles.

Space

The middle section of each session is called **Space**. The spaces we create can have a powerful impact on the relationships we build. In this part of the session, we are going to learn to Be Present as we engage with an activity. This section helps embed the habits of being curious, being present and reimagining.

Sanctuary

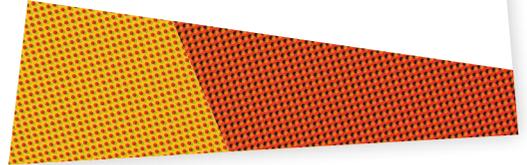
Lastly, the session ends with moment of **Sanctuary**. In this part of the session, we are going to learn to Reimagine, noticing where we are most in need of renewed hope. This is a time to reflect and know God's presence, to pray and ask God to be at work as you think about what to apply to your everyday context and what your Top Takeaway is.

The Sessions →

1 God's Call

Bible passage

The Beatitudes
(Matthew 5:5-9)



Before

Reflect

When we see complexity and division in the world around us, we can feel disheartened and overwhelmed. But Jesus also lived in a broken 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 three 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.

Heads Up

Think about a time...

a) when you experienced division or conflict

or

b) when you felt you belonged

There will be an opportunity to explore that further in this session.

10_ **difference.**

Story



Pastor Ray's story

What does this film say to you about God's call?

 Write your notes in these spaces...



The Beatitudes

(Matthew 5:5–9)

What strikes you about the link Jesus makes between being peacemakers and our identity as God's children?

Think about your reasons for coming on the Difference course.

Which of Jesus' words most resonates with you right now?

(e.g. the need for a more merciful world)

Space

The stories we bring

Use the space below to write or draw your responses during the Space activity.

What is most on your mind as you start the Difference course?

Think about a time...

- a) when you experienced division or conflict**
- or**
- b) when you felt you belonged.**

What struck you about sharing your stories?

In Small Groups



In groups of three, take turns to share a time...

a) when you experienced division or conflict

or

b) when you felt you belonged.

Make sure you listen carefully to what the other people in your group are sharing.

Sanctuary



Think back to what we learned of God's story of renewal and restoration. Ask God to renew in you a sense of identity as a child of God and of belonging in his story.

After →

Top Takeaway

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

Act

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

Be Curious_

How could I be a better listener?

 **Try** being curious about other people's stories. Put yourself in someone else's shoes today.

Be Present_

Where am I showing up and sticking around?
Who could I have 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_

Where am I in need of hope?
How could I act on the hopes I already have?

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

End

2 Crossing Divides

Bible passage

The Woman at the Well

(John 4:1–30)

Before

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 in following him is to identify the walls we create and the people on the other side.

During

Story



Sami's story

What does this story say to you about crossing divides?

 Write your notes in these spaces...



The Woman at the Well

(John 4:1–30)

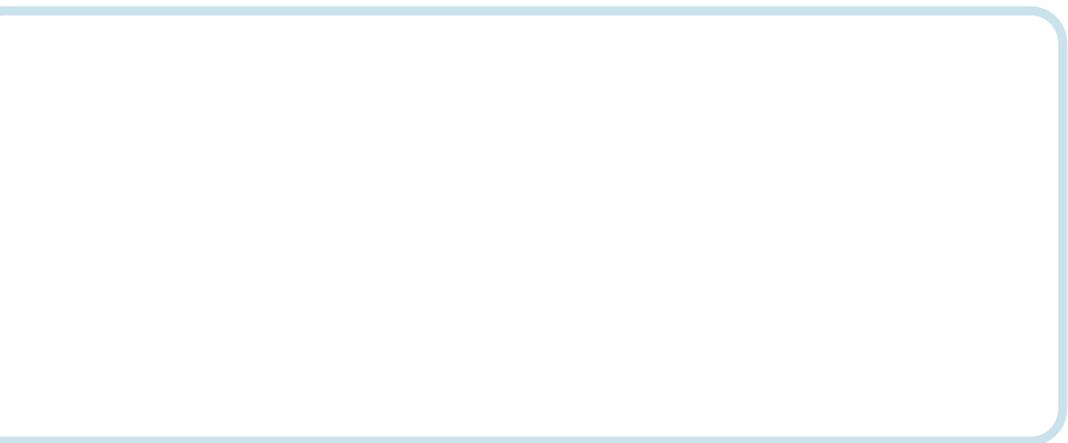
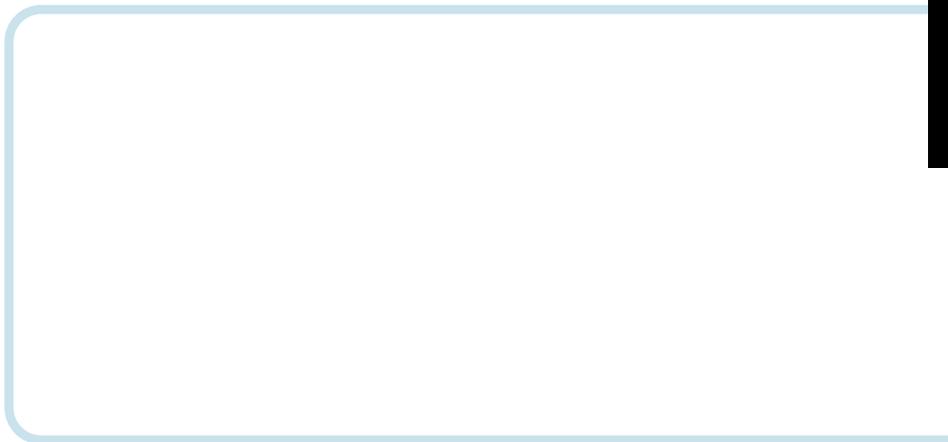
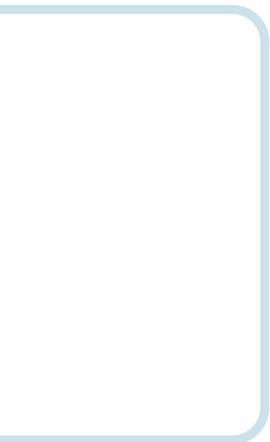
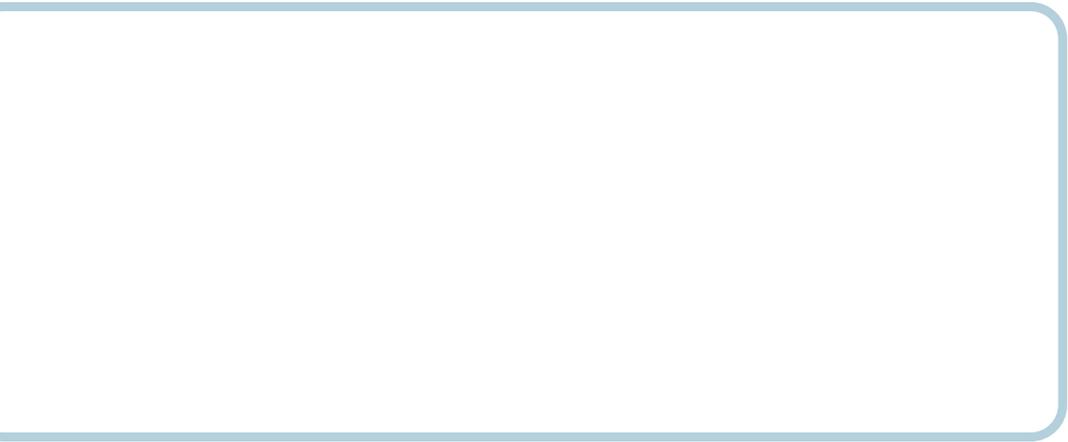
What do you learn about Jesus in this story?

In the film and the Bible passage, how do the three habits help people cross divides?

Space

Discover our walls

Use the space below to write or draw your responses during the Space activity.



Sanctuary



Divides and prejudice are part of the story of all of our lives. But we have an opportunity to be part of a new story.

After →

Top Takeaway

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

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_

How could I be a better listener?

 **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_

Where am I showing up and sticking around?
Who could I have better encounters with?

 **Try** spending some time with someone you don't usually choose to spend time with.

Reimagine_

Where am I in need of hope?
How could I act on the hopes I already have?

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

End

3 Navigating Disagreement

Bible passage

The Woman Who Washes Jesus' Feet

(Luke 7:36–50)

Before

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.

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, enabling them to disagree well.

Jesus isn't threatened by differing 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 ignoring difference. 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 be built when we disagree.

Heads Up

Think about a disagreement you have with someone which you would be prepared to explore further in this session.

During

Story



Mariam's story

What does this story say to you about navigating disagreement?

 Write your notes in these spaces...



The Woman Who Washes Jesus' Feet

(Luke 7:36–50)

What do you learn about Jesus in this story?

In the film and the Bible passage, how do the three habits help people navigate disagreement?

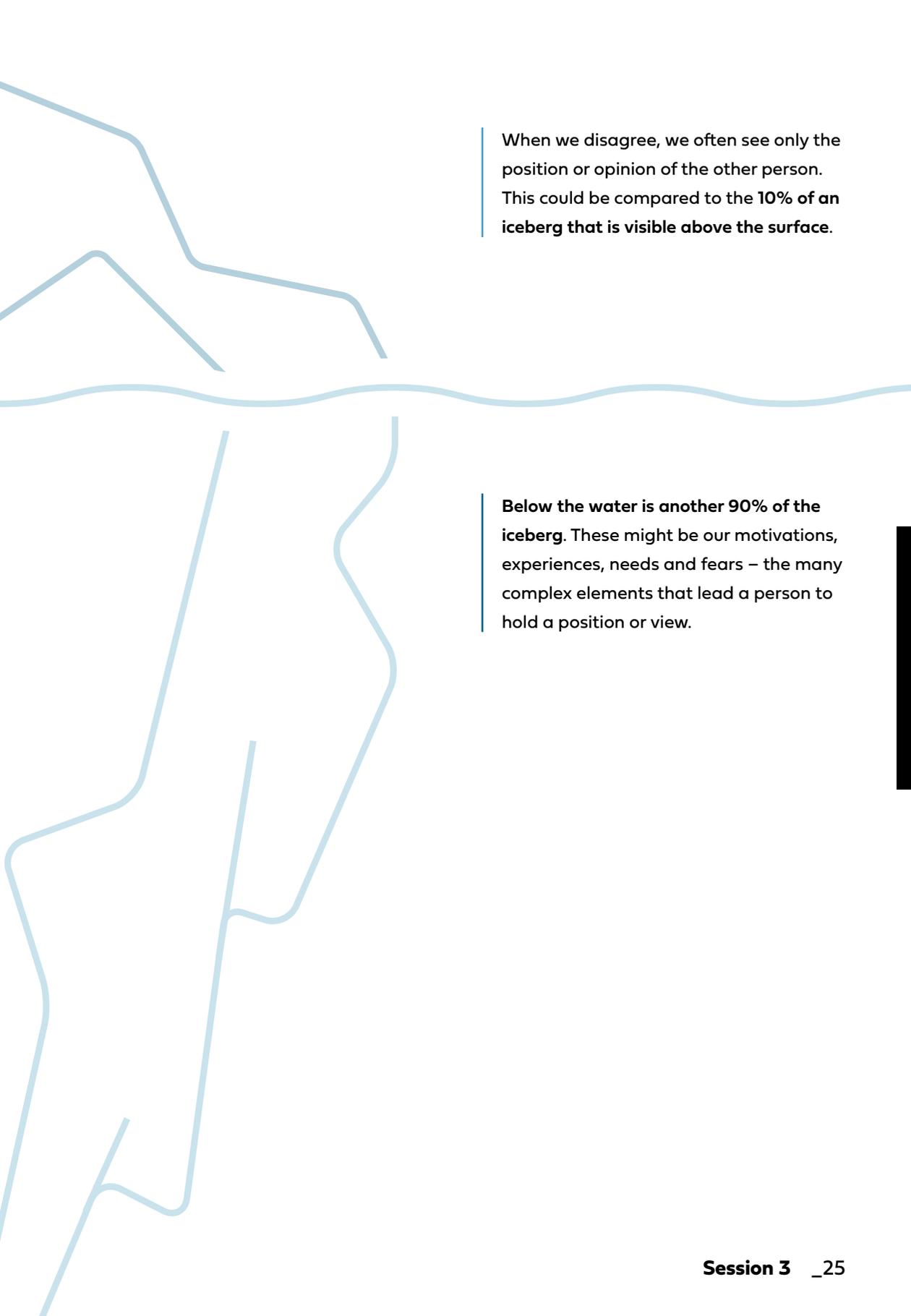
Space

The Iceberg

Use the space below to write or draw your responses during the Space activity.

When you disagree with someone, can you see beyond the surface?





When we disagree, we often see only the position or opinion of the other person. This could be compared to the **10% of an iceberg that is visible above the surface.**

Below the water is another 90% of the iceberg. These might be our motivations, experiences, needs and fears – the many complex elements that lead a person to hold a position or view.

Sanctuary



The path of our lives will bring us into contact with conflict and disagreement.
But we have an opportunity to reimagine our response.

After →

Top Takeaway

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

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_

How could I be a better listener?

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

Be Present_

Where am I showing up and sticking around?
Who could I have better encounters with?

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

Reimagine_

Where am I in need of hope?
How could I act on the hopes I already have?

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

End

4 Practising Forgiveness

Bible passage

Jesus and Peter on the Beach

(John 21:1–19)

Before

Reflect

God, in Jesus, has freely forgiven us and it is because we are forgiven that we are able to forgive others. We are forgiven forgivers.

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. Reconciliation may also not be possible or safe in a face-to-face meeting with someone. 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. It takes courage, hope and grace, and it cannot be rushed.

We might often focus on the big moments of forgiveness, but we are invited to make forgiveness a part of our daily 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.

Heads Up

Reflect on your experiences of forgiveness – both of forgiving others and of being forgiven. This will help you engage with this session, but you won't be expected to share anything you don't want to.

During

Story



Craig's story

What does this story say to you about practising forgiveness?

 Write your notes in these spaces...



Jesus and Peter on the Beach

(John 21:1–19)

What do you learn about Jesus in this story?

In the film and the Bible passage, how do the three habits help people practise forgiveness?

Space

Stepping into the story

Use the space below to write or draw your responses during the Space activity.

How do you feel as you move through the water towards Jesus?

What does it mean for you to eat breakfast with Jesus on this beach?

How do you know that Jesus has forgiven you?

How does this moment change the way you see

- yourself?
- your relationship with Jesus?
- your relationship with others when they let you down?

In Small Groups



"When I cultivate forgiveness in my small everyday encounters, I am preparing for a time when a much larger act of forgiveness will be asked of me, as it most certainly will... When I develop a mindset of forgiveness, rather than a mindset of grievance, I don't just forgive a particular act; I become a more forgiving person... What was once a reason for rupture and alienation becomes an opportunity for repair and greater intimacy."

The Book of Forgiving: the Fourfold Path for Healing Ourselves and Our World, by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Reverend Canon Mpho Tutu.

In groups discuss:

- What resonates with your own experience?
- What do you find challenging?

Sanctuary



An important part of our identity in Christ is that we are 'forgiven forgivers'. God, in Jesus, has forgiven us and forgiveness is a gift that we are entrusted to share generously with those around us, helped by the Holy Spirit.

After →

Top Takeaway

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

Act

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

Be Curious_

How could I be a better listener?

 **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_

Where am I showing up and sticking around?
Who could I have better encounters with?

 **Try** seeking God's presence in places or relationships where there is pain or injustice.

Reimagine_

Where am I in need of hope?
How could I act on the hopes I already have?

 **Try** reimagining a relationship or situation where forgiveness seems unachievable. Pray for hope and for God to change the situation.

End

5 Risking Hope

Bible passage

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



Before

Reflect

The kingdom of God is transformative because it is bringing something brand new that is often counter-cultural. It is a message of genuine hope because it turns broken systems of power the right way up – 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 do something normal and everyday to achieve the 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.

Heads Up

Think of a situation or relationship where you are hoping for change but feeling stuck. There will be an opportunity to explore this further in the session.

During

Story



Guvna B's and Tom's stories

What does this story say to you about the risk and hope involved in restoration?

 Write your notes in these spaces...



Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet

(John 13:1-17)

What do you learn about Jesus in this story?

In the film and the Bible passage, how do the three habits help people risk hope?

Space

Hopes and Habits

Think about a change you are longing to see in...

- your life
- your wider community
- society

Where do you feel resistance
or opposition to these hopes?



Think about the three habits we've been learning about throughout the course - Be Curious, Be Present and Reimagine.

What difference could these habits make to the situations you and others have shared?

Sanctuary



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

After →

Top Takeaway

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

Act

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

Be Curious_

How could I be a better listener?

 **Try** being curious about how God could use you to bring hope to the situation you're in.
What is the first step you could take?

Be Present_

Where am I showing up and sticking around?
Who could I have better encounters with?

 **Try** thinking about someone who has kept you going in difficult situations. How can you show gratitude for that person?

Reimagine_

Where am I in need of hope?
How could I act on the hopes I already have?

 **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.

End

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.

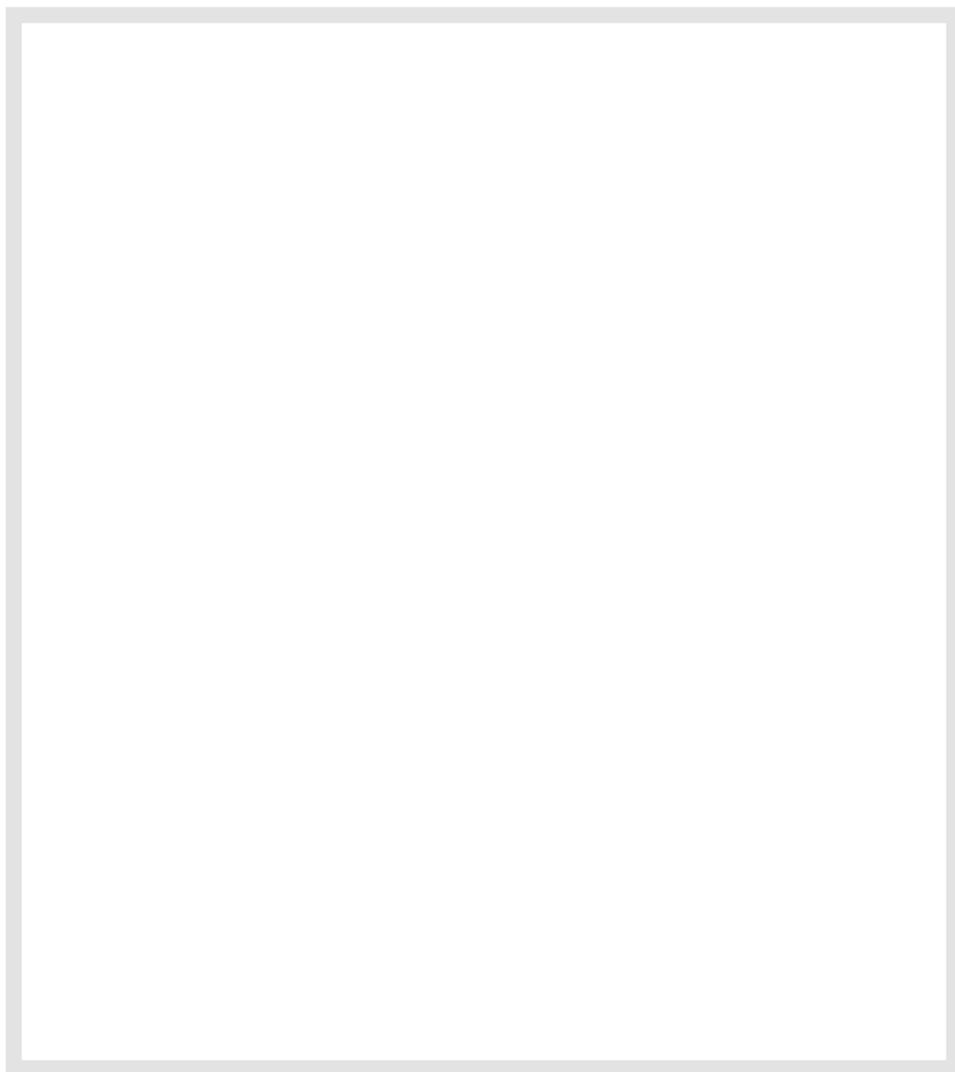
Inspire me to **Reimagine** what's possible – finding hope by glimpsing you at work.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Share your story

Do you have a story to share with us about the impact Difference has had for you?

For example, the impact it has had on your faith, or how the habits have helped you to see a relationship differently or cross divides.



If you'd like a chaplain to share your story with us, give them this page and they will send it to us.

Write any notes you may have here...



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