

Session 3

Navigating Disagreement

Key learning

It is possible to have good relationships even when we disagree.

Application

Not be afraid of conflict but learn to navigate it honestly and with empathy.

Habits focus

Be present by developing empathy for those we disagree with and having the confidence to share our perspective too.

Before the session

You will need:

- Two signs – one saying 'Agree' and one saying 'Disagree'
- Sticky tack
- Your group's vision board




Set up your room

You will need space for the students to walk from one side of the room to the other. On one side stick up the sign that says 'Agree', on the other stick the 'Disagree' sign. Look at the statements on p38 and p39 – choose and tailor these for your group.

Intro

 00:00

 5mins

 Slide 1

Aim of the session

This session is called **Navigating Disagreement**.

In this session we are going to:


- Explore how to disagree well in a culture where this is hard to do.
- Discover how to listen well and find our own voice.
- Practise being present by developing empathy for those we disagree with, and building our confidence to share our own perspective.



Recap

Recap the previous session and remind the group of the three habits of being curious, being present, and reimagining.

Ask your group what they remember from the previous session and if they have any examples of actions or stories from the past week related to the theme.

 Slide 2

Story

 00:00

 20 mins



Film

Discuss:

What do we learn about navigating disagreement in this film?

Draw out examples of the following: being authentic; being willing to walk towards conflict instead of running away; understanding the thoughts and feelings of someone else; choosing not to judge another person.

 Slide 3

 Slide 4

Choose either Option 1 or Option 2

Option 1






Bible story

Jesus and the woman at the well

In this session, we return to the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman. **Read the retelling of the passage to your group.** You can find this in Appendix 2 on p80, at the end of this guide. You may like to invite students to take on the roles of Jesus and the Samaritan woman.

Questions for discussion:

-  Did Jesus and the woman avoid difficult topics or express their different opinions and experiences?
-  What helped them have a good conversation even though they had different views?
-  How would applying the lessons we learn from Jesus and the Samaritan women help us when we have disagreements?



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- This is the longest recorded conversation that Jesus had in the Bible – they stuck with the conversation even though it might have been awkward and was sometimes tricky.
- Jesus and the Samaritan woman showed how to be present – they expressed themselves authentically and also listened to one another.
- Also draw on the **Key learning** from the Bible verse on p37.

Option 2



Bible verse Luke 6:31

Share the verse:

“Do to others as you would have them do to you.” (NRSVA)

Question for discussion:



How would applying this help us when we have disagreements?



Where do you see similar principles and values in other faiths, worldviews or cultures and community traditions?



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- We all want to be heard, respected and not judged – doing this for people we disagree with helps us strengthen the relationship.
- The habit of being present involves listening well and taking time to understand the other person.



Activity

Agree or disagree?

Discover our responses to disagreement and how we can empathise with those we disagree with.

Start here



1 Light-hearted statements

- Select one or two light-hearted statements below:
 - Dogs are better than cats
 - Money should be spent not saved
 - x singer is a better performer than x singer
 - x computer game is better than x computer game
 - x social media platform is better than x social media platform
 - Bowling is better than swimming
 - Sweets are better than chocolate
 - Snow is better than sun
 - Maths should be optional in school
- Read out the statements and ask the students:
 - Decide if you agree or disagree and then move to the sign that says 'Agree' or 'Disagree'.
- Invite one person from each side to explain their view.

- Ask the group to reflect on the following:
 - Think about how you felt when you listened to people explaining their opinions. Were you preparing your counter argument - or wondering why they think that?
 - If they agreed with you, were you relieved to hear someone back you up, did it embolden your view?
 - Were you making any assumptions about this person as they shared their view?" If they believe that, then they probably also think this.
 - If they disagreed with you, what was your body language doing, did you feel defensive?

2 Polarising statements

- Read one or two polarising statements from the list below and invite students to move accordingly.
 - Everyone should be vegan.
 - Social media benefits society.
 - The climate crisis is more important than raising the minimum wage.
 - Exams are pointless.
 - All teenagers should be able to vote
 - Going to university isn't worth the money.
 - Killing other people is never justified.
 - There's no point in individual lifestyle changes because the planet is already ruined.
 - Globalisation is a force for good.
 - It is easier being a young person today than it was for our parents.
 - Teenagers have too much choice.
 - The richest person in the world could end world hunger.
 - TikTok influencers have more impact on young people than teachers.
 - People had more morals 50 years ago than today.
- Invite one person from each side to explain their view.
(Remind the students to think about how they are listening.)

3 Step into the other person's shoes

- Read another polarising statement from the list and invite students to move accordingly.
- This time, instead of asking volunteers to share their opinion, ask all the students to move to the opposite position.
- Say:
 - Imagine you are stepping into the shoes of someone who holds the opposite view to you. (It's not easy, so don't worry if you can't do it straight away.)
 - Be curious about their point of view and why they might think that.
 - Ask yourself:
 - Q 'What experiences, relationships or beliefs may be influencing their view?'
 - Q 'Where do you think they might be coming from?'
- Ask for a volunteer from each side to share the opinion that is opposite to theirs, and the reasons behind that opinion.

Note: Model an example here for your group.
- Ask the volunteer:
 - **How does it feel to try and understand the opposite point of view?**

4 Think about a disagreement in your own life

- Standing where they are, invite students to think of a disagreement in their own life (either with someone or with a view in society). It doesn't need to be a big one - something you can think of in this short time.

Note: Give an everyday example of your own which demonstrates to the students at what level to share.
- Invite students to spend a moment quietly reflecting on their own view:

- What do you think and feel? What has led you to have this view and perspective?
- Now invite students to walk to the opposite of their own position. (If they're at one extreme, walk to the opposite extreme – if they're near the middle, you won't need to move much!)
- As they did earlier, invite students to 'step into the shoes' of the view they disagree with:
 - Be curious about where they are coming from.
 - Quietly reflect on what they may be thinking and feeling. Try to understand their perspective.



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- Disagreement and conflict are a normal part of life. Yet it can be hard to navigate disagreement (in our friendships, families, online).
- Each of us has a voice worth listening to, even if we disagree with each other.
- Fear of being cancelled, or saying the wrong thing can make it hard to find our voice, or to listen to someone who we think is wrong.
- It's valuable to notice how you usually respond in disagreement (e.g. avoiding conflict, trying to prove you're right) and to realise that others may respond differently.
- Handling disagreement well has the potential to strengthen friendships when we try to understand how the other person feels and what may have led them to their opinion.

→ Optional extra activities ⌚ +10 mins each

Find '**Blind spots**' in Appendix 4 on p83 and '**Cancel culture**' in Appendix 5 on p84.



Vision board

Guide your group through this activity using the instructions below:



- 1.** Draw an iceberg on the vision board, like this:
- 2.** Explain:
 - Did you know that only 10% of an iceberg is visible? The other 90% is below the water.
 - When we disagree, we often see only the opinion of the other person – this is like 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, hopes and fears – the many complex elements that lead a person to hold a position or view.
- 3.** Guide your group as follows:
 - Think about when people disagree.
 - What are the things we can see? (e.g. who people hang out with, what they post on social media, the opinions they share, the clubs they attend) – write these in part of the iceberg above the water.
 - What things might be happening that are harder to see? (e.g. life experiences or feeling afraid or hurt) – write these in the part of the iceberg below the water.



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- Let's try and understand the 90% 'below the water' when we disagree. Is there a disagreement this could help you with?
- Perhaps there is someone you often disagree with – thinking about the iceberg below the water may help you understand them more.



Top takeaway

Ask your group (to write down or say aloud):

What is something you want to remember from this session?
Give them a minute to reflect before answering.



Prayer and reflection

Please use this as a prayer or guide for reflection:

Loving God, fill us with your Spirit now.

We think about what we have learnt about empathising with the person we disagree with.

Help us to **be curious** about others' stories – listening as often as we speak.

We think about someone who we often disagree with and what we have learn about building good relationships even when we disagree.

Give us the courage to **be present** – showing up and sticking around.

We think about the things we have learned about navigating disagreement in this session.

Inspire us to **reimagine** what's possible – finding hope, knowing that you can transform all things.

In Jesus' name. Amen