



difference.

Host Guide

Youth Groups



Version 1: Spring 2024

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Let's get started... 

Before you begin

We're so excited you've chosen to run the Difference course with your youth group!

If you haven't already, you'll need to create an online account so you can access everything you need, including films and slides for every session. This is free and simple to do – just follow the steps below:

- ☐ **Register for youth training** – sign up for a session at difference.rln.global/difference-training
- ☐ **Head to difference.rln.global/sign-up and create an account** – this gives you access to the training and resources dashboard.
- ☐ **Explore the dashboard** – there are videos and articles introducing you to *Difference*.
- ☐ **Set up your *Difference* course** – we'd love to know when you're running the course and for how many people so that we can best support you along the way.
- ☐ **Invite people to participate!** We've created a range of resources for you to spread the word.
- ☐ **Download the films and slides** from the training and resources dashboard that accompany each of the seven sessions.

Scan here to get started!





Stay connected

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to get in touch with us at the email address below. You can also sign up to our mailing list or follow us on social media to hear our latest news and how you can get involved.

✉ hello@rln.global

🖱 difference.rln.global

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

📘 [difference.rln](https://www.facebook.com/difference.rln)

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

Feedback

We'd love to hear how you and young people find the *Difference* course. Please remember to ask your group to complete a feedback form at the end of the final session by visiting **difference.rln.global/feedback** or by scanning this QR code.

Scan
here!



Overview

About

We live in world which is messy, hurting and divided. For young people growing up and working out who they are, it can be hard to know how to handle conflict, differences, fear of saying the wrong thing, and the ups and downs of friendships.

Young people need the opportunity and support to build good relationships with themselves, their peers, and the world around them. Through *Difference*, young people will develop formational habits to encounter others well and navigate difficult situations. By participating in this programme, they will gain the tools and skills needed to cross divides, navigate disagreement and pursue a just and flourishing world as they seek to follow Jesus.

Difference teaches three habits

Difference offers three formational habits that can transform everyday relationships. These habits draw on the wisdom of expert peacemakers and Jesus' encounters in the Gospels.

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.

The three habits are:



Be Curious



Be Present



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.

Let's take a closer look at the three habits →

¹ 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



Be Curious

Wonder Why

Find out more

Take an interest

Listen well

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 work shows them that they have been heard and honoured. This can make it possible to begin to tread trickier territory together.

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.





Be Present

Be Real

Show up

Stick around

Engage

Encounter others with authenticity and confidence.

Our encounters 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 encountering them as they are.

We believe 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 as our whole, unique selves – not just the version of ourselves we want others to see. It takes courage to be real with one another, to share our questions and ask others to help us understand, but it can open up new depths of relationship.





Reimagine

Hope Together

Join with others

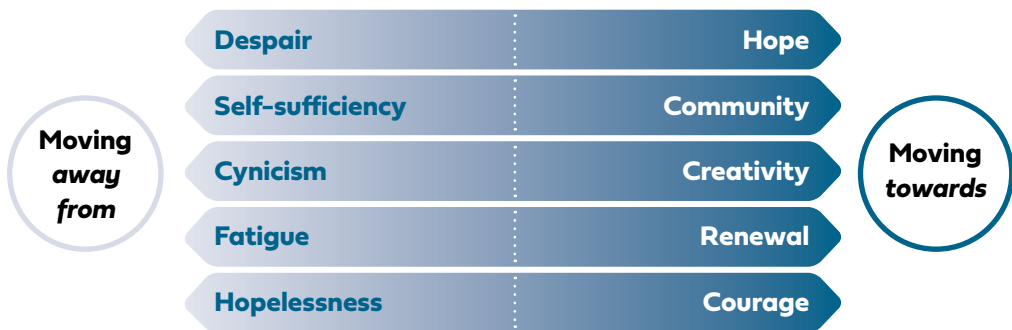
See beyond

Find a new story

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

Our worlds are shaped by our imagination. 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.



Sessions

The *Difference* course for youth groups has seven sessions:

0 Introduction

In complex and divided times, we can build reconciling habits that enable us to relate better to others and pursue a just and flourishing world for all.

1 The Big Picture

God invites us to be peacemakers – becoming part of God’s reconciling story in the world.

2 Crossing Divides

Sometimes our own assumptions or prejudice divide us from others – we can challenge these assumptions by being curious about the story we don’t know.

3 Navigating Disagreement

It is possible to have good relationships even when we disagree – instead of being afraid of disagreement and being cancelled, we can develop empathy for those we disagree with.

4 Pursuing Justice

Justice is an important part of peace-making – we are invited to recognise that the world is not as it should be, and to join with others to pursue a just and flourishing world.

5 Practising Forgiveness

Forgiveness is complex but transformational. Having recognised a hurt, we can begin to see if a better relationship is possible in the future.

6 Belonging Together

We flourish when we recognise our interconnectedness and the unique value we each have.

Using the session guides

Session structure

Each session of the course follows the structure below:

Intro

Create a welcoming space for your young people as they arrive. This is an opportunity to consolidate from the last session and share the aims of this session.

- Session theme
- Recap and feedback from previous week



Story

Stories matter, so we start with a section called **Story**. This includes a film exploring the session theme from the perspective of young people, and two Bible options: either a gospel account from Jesus' life or a short Bible verse. There are questions to guide your discussion with your group. If you have a large group, you may find it helpful to split into smaller breakout groups.

- Film
- Bible
- Discussion



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 section participants engage with their own experiences through an activity, which may be an interactive exercise or guided reflection. This section helps embed the habits of being curious, being present and reimagining.

- Activity or reflection



Sanctuary

Lastly the session ends with moment of **Sanctuary**. This is a time to reflect, through a simple creative activity. It enables young people to reflect on their learning and how to apply it. This section is an opportunity to close in prayer together

- Vision board
- Top takeaway
- Prayer and reflection

During each session

Each session has step-by-step instructions to help you host it, giving guidance on what to say, questions to ask and activities to run.



Film

Films exploring the session theme from the perspective of young people. Films are available on the training and resources dashboard on our website.



Bible

Option to explore either a Gospel account from the life of Jesus or a short Bible verse related to the session theme.



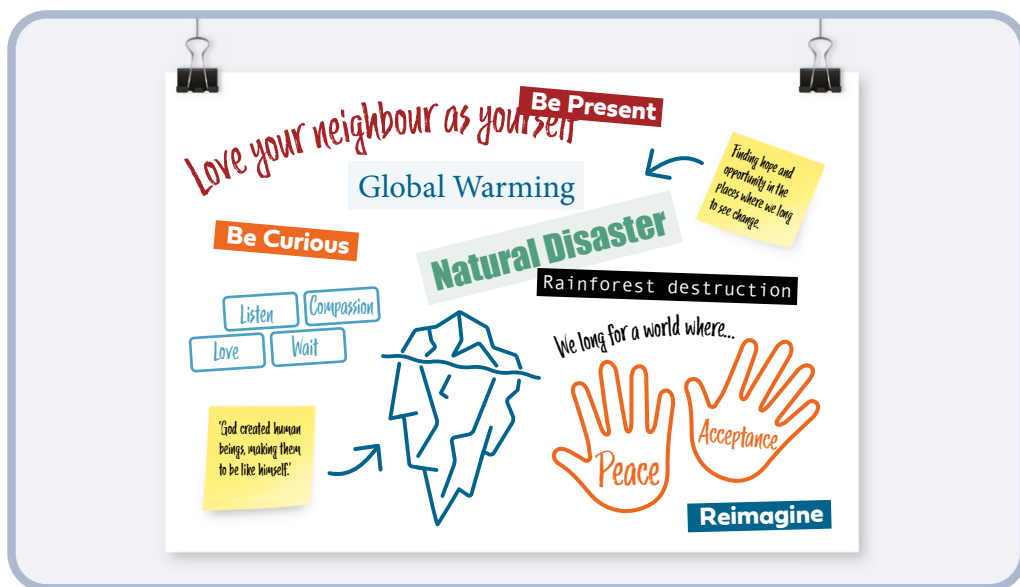
Activity

Instructions for activities in the **Space** section of each session. There are a range of activities to choose from.



Vision board

Throughout the course, you will build up a 'vision board' – a creative collage which young people add to each week as they reflect on the session themes.



For your vision board, you'll need need a large piece of paper, card or fabric sheet (at least the size of a giant poster – the bigger the better). Young people will add to the collage in every session, so leave enough space for adding elements in future activities and make sure you bring it to every session. At the end of the course, why not hang it on a wall as a reminder, or show it to your wider church for the young people to share what they have learnt?



Top takeaway

A moment for the young people to share what they want to remember from the session.



Prayer and reflection

Prayers and reflections to read out to your group, or to put into your own words.

Host pointers

Use these elements to help...

Timings

At the start of each session, you will see an overview with a list of all the possible activities for that session. Within this overview, you will see three options:

▶▶ **Compact session** with fewer activities, designed to last **35 minutes**.
(Please note that you will need slightly longer for Session 0.)

↔↔ **In-depth session** with more activities – lasting **60 minutes**.

✎ **Custom session** in which you choose what to do – we suggest you pick at least one activity from each of the three sections:
Story, Space and Sanctuary.

Each activity has a guide to timings. This consists of a range (e.g. 5-15 minutes) – within this range, you can adjust the activity to suit the amount of time you have.

00:00

Add your own time stamps to help keep each section on track.

Slides

Each session includes optional slides. Slides are available on the training and resources dashboard.



Enabling every young person to engage with and enjoy *Difference*

The below guidance is intended to help you create the safe, accessible and welcoming environment which will best enable the young people in your group to engage with, and enjoy, *Difference*.

Emotional regulation

Emotional regulation involves identifying, managing and responding to emotions. It is a key part of how we learn to engage with our own experiences and develop relationships with others. Within your group, some young people will find emotional regulation challenging. It is important to be aware of this when running activities in the sessions in which young people are invited to reflect on their own perspectives and actions.

Every person is different

It is particularly important to bear in mind that every person in your group will have had different experiences and will have different needs when engaging with the topics and themes explored in *Difference*. For some young people it will be helpful to encourage them to step out of their comfort zones and to challenge them appropriately. For others, it will be important to underline the importance of their wellbeing and ensure that they do not feel under pressure to engage (with individuals, groups or issues) when that is not what they need to do at this point.

Feeling safe

Starting on a journey to explore and develop the habits of being curious, being present and reimagining relies on the young people – and you as a host – feeling safe enough to express personal opinions and stories, and to listen to those of others.

When we feel threatened, embarrassed, or angry, the emotional part of our brain (called the amygdala) takes over and puts our rational thinking on hold. It's like our brain switches to survival mode, focusing on immediate reactions rather than careful thinking. This can make it hard to regulate our emotions, stay focused, or stop ourselves from acting impulsively.

For young people experiencing this defensive state, it becomes difficult to learn new things.

A safe social space

As we welcome young people into our group, we need to create a space where they feel safe and able to be themselves. This is not something that can be done by you as a host alone: it requires involvement and collaboration with the young people.

Part of this is about setting the group culture – an essential element of Session 0. As you complete the activities in the introductory session, make sure that you prioritise what the young people say when coming up with guidelines to govern the group's culture. Don't assume – keep listening and reflecting back what you think the young people are saying. Think about how you can enable young people to have ownership of this process – for example, a young person could hold the pen or summarise the suggestions.

A safe physical space

In addition to creating a space that is emotionally, mentally and spiritually safe, we need to create a space that is physically safe enough.



Location

The space you choose to meet in might have particular connotations for young people, depending on what else the room is used for. For example, meeting in a church building might bring up difficult feelings for someone, depending on their experience of church. It may be helpful to explore how the young people in your group respond to the space in which you are gathering. Consider if there are ways to enhance your group's sense of ownership of the space, as somewhere they can relax and be themselves



Set-up

Think carefully about how your room is laid out. How are chairs positioned? Are some formations more confrontational? Will you have chairs or are beanbags or floor cushions more appropriate? If you choose the latter, will everyone be able to sit down and get up? If some people in your group have limited mobility, think about how the room can be inclusive for them.



Area to take a break

It could be helpful to designate an area as a quiet space. Sometimes discussions, activities or interactions can become overwhelming for some young people – we don't always know what may be triggering due to different experiences or circumstances. A young person might need to spend a few moments on their own in a quiet space until they feel ready to return to the group. If you can, kit out a corner of your room with somewhere comfortable to sit, together with items such as noise-cancelling headphones (if a young person doesn't have their own) and fidget toys. It will be helpful to ask the young people what would help them if they need to take a break. At the start of each session, remind the group that this area is available.

Starting each session

At the start of your session, think about what your young people may need to be best able to engage. This will partly depend on where they have just come from. Some may need to need to calm down or let off steam.



Establishing a sense of calm

If you are running an evening group after a hectic day, you may need to help the young people establish a sense of calm. Using some simple breathing exercises might be enough.

You could also try an activity such as **5, 4, 3, 2, 1**:

- 5** ask the young people to look around and find **five** things that they can see
- 4** then close their eyes and notice **four** things that they can hear
- 3** then discover **three** things that they can feel (such as the way their jumper sits on their shoulders or the pressure of a table on their elbows)
- 2** next **two** things that they can smell
- 1** finally **one** thing that they can taste

Doing activities like these allows the young people to become present by focusing on their senses.

Letting off steam

If the young people have been sitting still for a long time immediately before your session (e.g. if you're meeting straight after school), they may need to do something energetic. Having an active game, a short (risk-assessed!) exercise routine or a moment to 'shake off' the day can help young people centre themselves and be ready to engage in something new.

Remember, tiredness or hunger can also hinder our brains' executive functioning, so you might want to serve some refreshments at the start of the session. It's probably not possible to include a nap time as part of your session!

Before the session

Ahead of each session, the following steps will help you prepare.

Read

Read the guide for the session, paying close attention to the instructions, pastoral notes and the session theme.

Set up

Prepare your room and ensure you have the materials you need for the activities. Make the session feel welcoming.

Consider accessibility

The materials are designed to be inclusive and interactive, including some movement around the room. It's essential to review each session and consider any necessary adaptations based on the needs of your group. There is a diverse range of needs that should be addressed to ensure all young people can fully participate in the course. Some things to consider are:

- Ensure that your meeting space is accessible for those with mobility issues, both in terms of reaching the venue and moving around within it. If activities involve physical movement, have a plan in place to ensure everyone can participate fully.
- For young people with auditory impairments, consider seating them closer to you to enhance their ability to hear clearly or lip-read if applicable.
- When using visual materials, be prepared to describe them accurately and promptly for young people with visual impairments. Additionally, encourage participants to bring their braille Bibles if they use them.
- Some participants may struggle to empathise with others or understand different perspectives. Break down activities into smaller steps and provide extra support in assessing emotions. Specific guidance is provided throughout the materials to assist in these situations.
- Listening skills may be challenging for those who struggle with interruptions or changing topics while others are speaking. Offer additional support, reminding them of their focus and role in listening exercises.
- Fiddle toys or putty can be beneficial for participants who need to occupy their hands to aid concentration.
- A visual running order for the session (displayed on a flip chart or piece of paper), along with warnings about activity endings, can help all participants prepare for transitions and changes.

The sessions →

Session 0

Introduction

Compact 40 mins

In-depth 60 mins

Custom

Session overview

<div> Intro p23 5 mins</div> <div>Summary of what this session is about</div>			
<div> Intro film p24 3 mins</div> <div>Short film unpacking <i>Difference</i> themes through young people’s voices</div>			
<div> Vision board p25 5-10 mins</div> <div>Exploring the impact of a divided and conflicted world</div>			
<div> Bible verse p26 5-10 mins</div> <div>John 10:10b</div>			
<div> Habits film p27 5 mins</div> <div>Short intro to the habits</div>			
<div> Be Curious: Listen up! p27 5-10 mins</div> <div>Storytelling and story-listening</div>			
<div> Be Present: Take the register p29 5-10 mins</div> <div>Discussion about being present</div>			
<div> Reimagine: Reimagining creatures p31 5-10 mins</div> <div>Creative activity involving drawing creatures against the clock</div>			
<div> Establish a healthy group culture p33 10-20 mins</div> <div>Lay the essential foundations</div>			
<div> Closing prayer p35 2 mins</div> <div>Reflect on the learning and habits</div>			

Session summary:

Key learning

In a divided and complex world, it can be hard to relate to each other well but in the life of Jesus we see three reconciling habits which can help us respond well

Application

Explore the three habits as a response to division and fracture

Habits focus

The three habits are the framework for the course and for creating a healthy group culture

Before the session

You will need:

- A very large sheet of paper or card (A1 or bigger) for your vision board (see p14)
- Felt-tip pens

Set up your room:

- Your group will need to be able to gather round the vision board to reflect together

Intro

 00:00

 5 mins

Aim of the course and the session

Welcome your group to the *Difference* course and tell them what it's about:

- We live in a complicated, messy and divided world where it can be hard to relate to each other well.
 - Conflict is a normal part of home, school and social life but can be hard to navigate.
 - We might fear saying the wrong thing or not know how to handle differences.
 - Our communities can feel polarised or fragmented.
 - Conflict can be reinforced by power imbalances.

- Through *Difference*, we'll explore three habits: **Be Curious**, **Be Present** and **Reimagine**.
 - These reconciling habits come from the life of Jesus and the wisdom of expert peacemakers.
 - These habits can help us respond well to situations and build relationship with people, even when this feels difficult.
- There will be seven sessions, exploring the topics of being a peacemaker, crossing divides, navigating disagreement, justice, forgiveness and hope.

In today's session we are going to:

- Reflect on where we see division and broken relationships in the world today.
- Introduce you to three habits that helps us build good relationships with others and respond to difficult situations.
- Build a healthy group culture.

Story

 00:00



Intro film

 **3 mins**

Short film unpacking the themes of *Difference* through the voices of young people.



Activity Vision board

🕒 5-10 mins

Identify the ways difference, division or disagreement impacts young people.

1. Lay out the very large piece of paper, bed sheet or card which you are going to use for your vision board.
2. Ask participants to think of an example of difference, division or disagreement which matters to young people and which they have been aware of in the last month. (It might help if you give an example e.g. climate injustice, bullying. You could ask your group what they notice about power dynamics – who has power and how is it used?)
3. Ask participants to write or draw these on the vision board, building up a 'graffiti wall' of responses (remember you will add to this vision board every session so leave enough space for future activities).
4. After a few minutes, invite your group to look at all the responses and invite a few reflections.



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- We live in a world where there is division, disagreement and it can be difficult to relate well to each other.
- Many of the problems we see in the world and experience in our own lives are caused by broken relationships – with God, with others, with ourselves and with creation.
- In this course, we will be discovering – and taking steps to developing – three habits that can help us respond to these situations and build stronger relationships.



Bible story

John 10:10b

⌚ 5-10 mins

Share the verse (explaining that these are Jesus' words):

"I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness." (GNT)



Questions for discussion:

- What is needed for everyone to live 'life in all its fullness'?
- How do our relationships with others impact this?



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- This verse shows us the abundant vision God has for human life – we were designed to receive life as a gift and flourish in it.
- We are made for relationship – other people help us experience life in all its fullness.
- When relationships are damaged, or where there is injustice or hostility, we don't experience life to the fullness of its potential.

Throughout this course we will be exploring and building three habits which help us build relationships with others and navigate a complex and divided world. These are habits seen in the life of Jesus. They are the habits of being curious, being present and reimagining.



Optional film

Introduction to the habits

Slide 7



Activity

🕒 5-10 mins

Be Curious: Listen up!

Understand what being curious is about and how it helps us relate better to others

Start here



Slide 8

1

Introduce the habit, **Be Curious**, covering the key points on p8.

2

Invite the young people to get into pairs and number themselves '1' and '2'.

3

Explain that participants will each take it in turns to share about either of the following:

- Talk about something you love or loathe
- The meaning of your name and/or why you were given that name

4

Tell your group:

When you are the listener, try to:

- listen to what the person is saying
- ask questions to show that you're listening and interested
- focus on them, rather than talking about your own experiences
- summarise what your partner has said and ask if you have got the story correct

5

Take turns to each share, with 1s sharing first.

After 1s have shared for two minutes, invite 2s to repeat back a summary of what they heard.

6

2s now share, while 1s listen.

After two minutes, invite 1s to repeat back a summary of what they heard.

7

All come together and ask for a volunteer to 'introduce' their partner to the group, sharing something they learnt about their partner.



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- When we seek to understand and listen to someone else's experience, interests or story, we can build trust and understanding and show them that we value them.
- This makes us less likely to react defensively or judgementally, or by avoiding them.
- Being curious about another's story helps us understand their perspective and appreciate their contribution.
- Being curious about our own story can help us understand ourselves better and this can also improve our relationships.



Activity

🕒 5-10 mins

Be Present: Take the register

Understand the habit of being present and how it helps us relate better to others

Start here



1

Introduce the habit, **Be Present**, covering the key points on p9.

2

Ask your group:

Why do we take a register at the start of a school lesson or a club?

If it doesn't come up, highlight:

- We know who is present.

- We can ensure that everyone who should be here, is here.
- We can follow up to make sure that those who are not present are safe and okay.
- At school, we can ensure that students get to their lessons on time and help with their time management.

3

Ask your group:

What does a register not do?

If it doesn't come up, highlight:

- It doesn't ensure people are ready to listen and learn.
- It does not mean everyone is happy, confident or wants to be there.
- It does not mean that everyone feels physically or emotionally well.
- It does not mean there will not be distractions e.g. a wasp in the room, or a fire drill.
- It does not help us understand what someone thinks, feels or believes.

4

(Optional) Ask your group:

What's the difference between a disagreement on social media and a conversation in person?

If it doesn't come up, highlight:

- In person, we can see facial expressions and body language so we understand better what the other person is trying to communicate.
- We sometimes find it harder to say hurtful things when we can see the other person's face.
- Social media can enable people to access and listen to different points of view.



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- The habit of being present is about encountering others authentically. It's about choosing to be who we really are.
- It is also about enabling other people to do the same, and be themselves.
- When we're really present with another person, it's easier to build a good relationship with them.



Activity

🕒 5-10 mins

Reimagine: Reimagining creatures

Understand the habit of reimagining and how it helps us relate better to others

Start here



1

Introduce the habit, **Reimagine**, covering the key points on p10.

2

Give everyone in the class a blank piece of A4 paper and ask them to fold it into thirds.

3 On **Go**, start a 30-second timer and ask the young people to draw the head of any creature (this can be an animal or a mythical creature!) on a third of the paper, with the neck up to the fold line.

On **Stop**, participants fold the paper over and give it to someone else in the room.

4 On **Go**, start a 30-second timer and ask the group to draw the torso of a creature including 'arms' but not the legs, up to the second fold line.

On **Stop**, participants fold the paper over and pass on to someone else in the room.

5 On **Go**, start a 30-second timer and ask the group to draw the 'legs' of a creature.

On **Stop**, participants can open the paper and see their amazing creations.



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- Imagination enables us to be creative.
- This is even more true when we join with others and reimagine.
- We are confined by our own imaginations, but with others we can reimagine something new.

Establish a healthy group culture

🕒 10-20 mins

Introduction

Introduce the importance of setting a healthy group culture, highlighting the following points:

- During the *Difference* course, we'll explore things that matter to us.
- We won't agree on everything and that's ok – we need to be able to disagree with respect.
- We might talk about things that we find difficult – it's important to listen rather than judge.
- No topic is neutral – something that is not hard for you may be very hard for someone else.
- It's essential that each individual feels empowered to express themselves, recognising that our experiences and needs vary greatly from person to person. Open and honest communication about our feelings is key.
- If anyone feels uncomfortable, it's important to speak up and inform a leader or someone else in the group. This ensures that everyone's voice is heard and respected, fostering an environment of understanding and support.

Note: If you have a space where people can take a break, let your group know.

Young people need to be aware that, in the event of a safeguarding concern, you will need to follow safeguarding procedures - which may involve sharing what you have been told with a safeguarding professional.

Explore some guidelines

Choose either Option 1 or Option 2

Option 1

Invite your group to come up with some group guidelines and attitudes which will make the group safe enough to share personal thoughts, opinions and experiences.

You may like to use the guidelines below, which are based on the three *Difference* habits:



Be Curious

- Together we can learn to disagree well when we have different opinions. This can be hard. If we hear something we don't understand, it can help to ask a question.
- Avoid judging others.
- Listen and observe carefully in order to try to understand others' perspectives.



Be Present

- Try to stay engaged and avoid distraction.
- Be honest.
- Don't interrupt people.
- Try to notice the thoughts and feelings you have during conversations.



Reimagine

- Be prepared for others to surprise you.
- Don't treat other people as a spokesperson for their culture or community.
- Remember that God is present in our conversations.

Option 2

If you already have some guidelines that your group uses, look at these and ask:

- If we're going to talk about things that might be personal to us, do these guidelines give us a safe enough space to do so? Why? Why not?
- If we're going to have conversations where we might disagree with each other, do these guidelines help us to do that without falling out?
- What guidelines might we need to add to help us do these things?
- How can the three habits of **Being Curious**, **Being Present** and **Reimagining** help us have a healthy group culture?



Closing prayer

Loving God, as we begin the *Difference* course together, inspire us to be curious, to be present and to reimagine as we seek a world where everyone can flourish. In Jesus' name. Amen

Notes

End of session 0

Session 1

The Big Picture

Compact 35 mins

In-depth 60 mins

Custom

Session overview

<div> Intro p37 5 mins</div> <div>Summary of what this session is about</div>			
<div> Film p38 5-10 mins</div> <div>Young people's perspectives on being a peacemaker</div>			
<div> Bible passage p39 10-20 mins</div> <div>The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12)</div>			
<div> Bible verse p41 5-10 mins</div> <div>Matthew 5:9</div>			
<div> The big picture p42 10 mins</div> <div>Explore the idea that we don't see the whole picture</div>			
<div> What's a peacemaker? p43 10 mins</div> <div>Fingers on buzzers! Unpack the meaning of being a peacemaker</div>			
<div> The walk p45 10 mins</div> <div>Reflect on our own uniqueness and our diversity as a group</div>			
<div> Vision board p47 5 mins</div> <div>Reflect on this session</div>			
<div> Prayer and reflection p48 5 mins</div> <div>Reflect on the learning and habits</div>			

Session summary:

Key learning

God calls us to be peacemakers – becoming part of God’s reconciling story in the world

Application

Consider God’s invitation to be a peacemaker

Habits focus

Be curious about God’s reconciling story and our role within it

Before the session

You will need:

- Slides with close-up images and the means to show them to your group
[Optional– if you do **The big picture** activity]
- Your group’s vision board

Set up your room:

- Your group will need to be able to gather round the vision board to reflect together
- If you do **The walk** activity, you will need enough room for the young people to walk in a line side by side

Intro

 00:00

 5 mins

Aim of the course and the session

This session is called **The Big Picture**.

In this session we are going to:

- Explore God’s invitation to be peacemakers in a divided world.
- Be curious about how we can be part of God’s story of peace and reconciliation.



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.

Story

 00:00



Film

 5-10 mins

Discuss: What do we learn about being a peacemaker in this film?

Draw out examples of where your group see the habit of being curious
- asking questions; taking an interest; overcoming assumptions;
choosing not to judge.

Option 1



Bible passage Matthew 5:1-12

🕒 10-20 mins

Share the passage (the version below is from the NRSVA):

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

³ 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵ 'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

⁷ 'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

⁸ 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹ 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰ 'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ 'Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Q **Questions for discussion** (choose as many as your group have time for):

- What is surprising or unexpected in what Jesus says here?
- Were there any words or ideas in this passage that were difficult to understand?
- What is a peacemaker? What's the difference between making peace and 'keeping the peace'?
- Why do you think Jesus talks about peacemakers being blessed?
- What is the point Jesus is making in this passage?
- Where do you see the need for peace?
- If you put this passage into action, how would it change the way you live?



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- This passage shows us that being a peacemaker involves longing for justice, honouring those living in poverty and the powerless, having humility – and getting challenged in the process!
- In this passage, Jesus is telling us that much of the world is upside down – God's kingdom is about putting things the right way up.
- The least powerful, the grieving, and those longing for a world made right may feel like they're 'last' now – in God's kingdom, they will be first.
- When we are peacemakers, we live out our identity as God's children. Being a peacemaker is one of the ways we show that we are part of God's family.

- Being a peacemaker is not about keeping quiet or maintaining the status quo – the point of Jesus' words here is that God's kingdom will shake up things as they currently are, so that peace, justice and good relationships are restored.
- Jesus will live out all the values we see here in his ministry – he shows us what it means to be a peacemaker.

Option 2



Bible verse Matthew 5:9

Share the verse (explaining that these are Jesus' words):

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." (NRSVA)



Questions for discussion:

- Why do you think Jesus talks about peacemakers being blessed?
- What is a peacemaker? What's the difference between making peace and 'keeping the peace'?



Key learning

- See the **Key learning** box on p40-41.



Activity The big picture

 5-10 mins

Reflect on the idea that sometimes we see only a small part of the big picture

Start here



- 1 Using the slides, show your group the first image, which is a close-up section of a larger image.
- 2 Ask the group to guess what the bigger picture might be from looking at this zoomed-in image.
- 3 Show the larger picture and see if anyone got it right.
- 4 Repeat with the remaining images.



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- The Bible tells us that God is at work to restore all things – to bring reconciliation to all of creation – and we’re invited to be part of that story.
- Sometimes it can be hard to see how our own stories fit into this bigger picture – that’s something we’ll explore though *Difference*.



Activity

What’s a peacemaker?

Unpack the meaning of being a peacemaker

🕒 10-15 mins

Start here



→ Optional extra activity

Using the QR code, show the Bible Project animation on the Beatitudes.



Now begin the activity:

1

Each young person pretends they have a buzzer, which they are ready to push and make a buzzing noise.

📄 Slide 21

📄 Slide 22

📄 Slide 23

2

Willing contestants have to speak for a minute on the topic of 'Being a peacemaker' without hesitating, going off-topic or repeating themselves – if anyone hears them do these things, they must press loudly on their buzzer! It's now the next person's turn.

3

After a few rounds, write a word cloud on a wipe-board/flip chart with participants offering their responses. Ensure that the word cloud includes ideas related to:

- Being active/engaged – not passive, 'keeping the peace'
- Justice – standing up for what is right
- Not something we do 'to' others – something we practise in our own lives
- Reconciliation – the healing and renewal of broken relationships
- Disagreeing well
- Peace is not simply the absence of conflict but the presence of fullness of life for everybody



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- The call to be a peacemaker isn't about 'keeping the peace' and avoiding conflict, but about getting involved in a messy, conflicted world – joining in with what God is doing.
- Trying to be a peacemaker won't always be easy – it can be frustrating, our attempts can go wrong – this is to be expected and is part of following Jesus' way of peace, but there is hope and possibility to be found as we pursue peace.
- Becoming a peacemaker is a journey – not an immediate transformation.



Activity The walk

🕒 10-15 mins

Reflect on our own uniqueness, the diversity of our stories and the fact that God invites us each to be peacemakers in our own contexts, with our own gifts and complexities

Start here



1

Invite your group to stand somewhere where there is space to collectively move forward in a straight line.

2

Give the participants the following instructions, encouraging them to be honest in their responses.

- Move forward if you have a pet
- Move backwards if that pet is a dog
- Move forward if you enjoy superhero films
- Move forward if you feel like a peacemaker
- Move forward if you enjoy drawing
- Move backwards if you like making music
- Move forward if you like taking part in sports
- Move backwards if you have a hero
- Move forward if you would like to be a hero
- Move forward if you are the class joker
- Move backwards if you believe in aliens
- Move forward if you have cried this year
- Move forward if you like to win/are competitive
- Move forward if you feel worried today
- Move backwards if you feel hopeful today
- Jump in the air/clap if you are a human being

3

Ask the group what they notice about the process.



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- As we set out on the *Difference* course we recognise that we are all different and we each have different starting points. We each bring our own hopes, hobbies, worries and wonderings. Over the next few weeks we will explore the subjects of peacemaking, conflict and flourishing from our different perspectives.
- Being a peacemaker is not about being superhuman, invincible, infallible and able to change the world. Instead we're invited to be fully human - we are fractured, conflicted, forgiven works in progress.
- We come to God's invitation - of making the world the 'right-way-up' - all unique, different and of deep value.
- We are invited to come as we are, and to be curious about God's story of reconciliation, in our own lives, in our relationships and in the world.



Vision board

🕒 5 mins

Guide your group through this activity using the instructions below:

1. Draw a large rectangle on your vision board, representing an 'invitation'. (Remember to leave enough room on your vision board for activities in future weeks!)
2. Inside the rectangle, leave a large space at the top, then write '...is invited to be part of God's story of peace and reconciliation in the world'.
3. Invite each member of your group to write their own name in the space at the top.



Key learning

Please highlight the point below:

- Each one of us is invited to come as we are, with our own story, to be part of God's story of healing, renewal and restoration in the world.



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 read this aloud:

Loving God, fill us with your Spirit now.

We think about what we have learnt about your story of reconciliation in the world.

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

We think about what we have learnt about peace and how we can pursue it.

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

We think about your invitation to join with you by becoming peacemakers.

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

In Jesus' name. Amen

End of session 1

Notes

Session 2

Crossing Divides

Compact 35 mins

In-depth 60 mins

Custom

Session overview

<div> Intro</div> <div>Summary of what this session is about</div> <div>p525 mins</div>			
<div> Film</div> <div>Young people’s perspectives on crossing divides</div> <div>p525-10 mins</div>			
<div> Bible story</div> <div>Jesus and the woman at the well (John 4:3-42)</div> <div>p5310-20 mins</div>			
<div> Bible verse</div> <div>Genesis 1:26a</div> <div>p545-10 mins</div>			
<div> Discovering our walls</div> <div>Discover the ways prejudices divide us from others</div> <div>p5510-15 mins</div>			
<div> Dismantling our walls</div> <div>Consider how to overcome the prejudices that divide us from others</div> <div>p585-15 mins</div>			
<div> Behind the wall</div> <div>Consider how to overcome assumptions we make</div> <div>p605-10 mins</div>			
<div> Vision board</div> <div>Reflect on this session</div> <div>p625 mins</div>			
<div> Prayer and reflection</div> <div>Reflect on the learning and habits</div> <div>p635 mins</div>			

Session summary:

Key learning

Sometimes our own assumptions or prejudice divide us from one another – Jesus shows us how we can cross these divides

Application

Challenge our assumptions and engage with others who are different from us

Habits focus

Be curious by listening to the story we don't know

i Important: Be clear and explain to your group that this session is about the people we avoid or judge for the wrong reasons – because of the assumptions we make about them, without knowing them. It is not about any situations where distance is needed for us to stay safe – for example, in situations of abuse, harm, or where others put us in danger.

Before the session

You will need:

- Sticky notes
- Marker pens
- A suitable wall or room divider on which to stick the sticky notes (or hardback books or boxes such as shoeboxes)
- Your group's vision board

Set up your room

- Decide where and how to 'build the wall' for the **Space** activities

Intro

 00:00

 5 mins

Aim of the session

This session is called **Crossing Divides**.

In this session we are going to:

- Discover the assumptions or prejudices we have about others.
- Explore how we can engage better with people who are different from us.
- Practise being curious by asking questions and taking an interest in others.



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.

Story

 00:00


Film

 5-10 mins

Discuss: What do we learn about crossing divides in this film?

Draw out examples of where participants see the habit of being curious — asking questions; taking an interest in others; overcoming assumptions; choosing not to judge another person.

Option 1



Bible story

🕒 10-15 mins

Jesus and woman at the well (John 4:3-42)

Read the retelling of the passage to your group. You can find this at the end of these session notes on p130. You may like to invite young people to take on the roles of Jesus and the Samaritan woman.



Questions for discussion (choose as many as your group have time for):

- What was the first thing Jesus did when he met the woman in the story?
- What divides or differences do you notice in this passage?
- Why was it unusual for Jesus and the woman to have a conversation? What questions did Jesus and the Samaritan woman ask each other? Could they have had such a long conversation without asking questions?
- It was unusual for men to talk to women they weren't related to, and it was unusual for Jews (like Jesus) to talk to people from Samaria. What do you think Jesus is doing here?
- What do we learn about crossing divides in this story? Is there anything that could help us cross divides in our own lives?



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- Jesus and the Samaritan woman were able to cross the religious, cultural and gender divides that separated them. They did this by being curious – asking questions in order to have a conversation.
- Jesus and the Samaritan woman were present – they took time to listen to each other.
- Taking time to listen to someone different from ourselves is a great way to cross divides.
- Also draw on the **Key learning** from the Bible verse on p55.

Option 2



Bible verse Genesis 1:26a

🕒 5-10 mins

Share the verse:

“So God created human beings, making them to be like himself.” *(Good News translation)*



Questions for discussion:

- What does this verse teach us about one another?
- Why is this important in our relationships with people who are different from us?
- Think about people who are your ‘enemies’. What does it mean to treat them as someone made in God’s image?



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- This verse tells us that every person is of deep value – their story is worth listening to.
- When we are curious – wondering what life is like for the other person, asking respectful questions in order to understand them better – we show them that they matter.

Space

00:00

Slide 10



Activity part 1

10-15 mins

Discovering our walls

Discover the ways prejudices divide us from others

Start here



i Important: Remind your group that this activity is about the people we judge or hold at arm's length because of our own assumptions and opinions, without really knowing them. It is not about removing boundaries protecting us from harmful, abusive or bullying situations.

Also remember that different members of your group will have different needs – for some it will be helpful to be encouraged to step out of their comfort zone and challenge their assumptions; for others, it will be more helpful to be reminded of the importance of resting from the continual challenge of trying to cross divides. This activity is not about judging ourselves or one another negatively.

Give every participant a sticky note. Use the following instructions to guide your group:

1 Can you think of a person or group of people you keep your distance from – people you don't engage with or feel uncomfortable with because they're different e.g. people with different dress style, age, music taste, beliefs, backgrounds, political views, friendship groups. (You won't have to name them aloud.)

i Note to host: This is about people we keep at arm's length for the wrong reasons. Give your own example – this will model the boundaries of this activity for your group. It may be helpful to name cliques or groups which exist in the young people's schools or clubs.

2 Reflect:

- Why do you find it hard to engage with them?
- How do you feel when you think about them?
(e.g. "I feel angry", "I feel excluded", "I feel disrespected")

3 Call out words to describe how you feel when you think of these people. (Take a moment to acknowledge these feelings – they are important.)

4 On your sticky note, write how you might respond negatively to the people you have in mind e.g. "I walk away", "I ignore/block them", "I make jokes at them" "I keep the conversation short", "I don't follow them".

5

Stick the sticky notes on your wall or divider. These actions and behaviours are an understandable response to feeling uncomfortable. But sometimes they can be like bricks that build a wall and create divides between us and other people.

(When everyone has finished, invite the group to gather around the wall of sticky notes. Ask someone to read the words aloud.)

6

Ask:

What do you notice? What are the power dynamics in the situation you have in mind? Who has more or less influence? Does this affect your response to them?



Key learning

Whilst standing around the wall of sticky notes please highlight the points below:

- The point of this activity is not to judge our responses as good or bad but just to notice them.
- It's normal for human beings to stick with people similar to ourselves. We often find ourselves in echo chambers – but this can lead to or reinforce presumptions and prejudices about those who are not like us.
- Our reactions can build a wall between us and others (sometimes these may not be fair or justified).
- This wall can become so high we stop seeing the person on the other side – we only see the image we've created of them.
- Recognising the power dynamics in the situation can help us understand a divide better.
- In this activity, we have been curious – asking questions to discover more about ourselves and others.



Activity part 2

Dismantling our walls

🕒 5-15 mins

Find the steps we can take to overcome our prejudice

Start here



Still standing around the wall of sticky notes, use the following instructions to guide the group.

1

Now try to step into the shoes of the person or group you were thinking about.

- How do you think that other person/group might feel this week?
- What might make it hard for them to engage with people who are different from them?



Note to host: This part of the activity might be difficult for some young people. Be aware of the participants in your group and be ready to chat with them if they need extra help to imagine situations from another's perspective.

You might use these questions instead:

- What questions can we ask of the other person/group that might tell us what they think? (e.g. 'Why do you always do [action]?')
- Write down some emotions on a piece of paper. Which of these emotions might the other person/group be feeling? Why? If someone did this to you, how would you feel?

2

Reflect: What one step could you take this week to encounter someone on the other side of your wall?

Invite: Call out your ideas. [As people share these steps aloud, take down the sticky notes one by one, thus removing some of the 'bricks' in the 'wall'.]



Note to host: For some, encountering someone on the other side of a divide might be too big a step to take now. Encourage participants that this is a process. By simply identifying the person/group and the problem, they have been curious and have considered the divide. Remind them of the word 'yet'. They might not feel able to cross the divide now, but that doesn't mean that they will never feel able to cross the divide. Some people may have already tried to cross a divide and found the person on the other side unresponsive or unhelpful – sometimes we need to step back and offer this situation to God.



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- It can be difficult to look beyond our own opinions about someone and wonder what life is like for them.
- Simple actions can help us overcome the assumptions we make about others and help us recognise everyone's high value and worth (all made in the image of God).
- In this activity, we have been curious – wondering what another person's experience is like.



Activity Behind the wall

⌚ 5-10 mins

Discover the ways prejudices divide us from others and consider some steps we might take to overcome these

Start here



i Important: Remind your group that this activity is about the people we avoid or judge because of our own assumptions and opinions, without really knowing them. It is not about removing boundaries protecting us from harmful, abusive or bullying situations.

Also remember that different members of your group will have different needs – for some it will be helpful to be encouraged to step out of their comfort zone and challenge their assumptions; for others, it will be more helpful to be reminded of the importance of resting from the continual challenge of trying to cross divides. This activity is not about judging ourselves or one another negatively.

1

On a flipchart or large page, draw the outline of a person.

Here's an example!



2

Invite your group to look at the person you have drawn and guide them using the following instructions:

- Think about a group we feel different from (some divides to consider could be rural/urban, old/young).
- Call out words to describe how you feel when you think of these people. (Take a moment to acknowledge these feelings – they are important.)
- Each take a sticky note and write on it an assumption you have about these people. (It might be an opinion you think they have, or a behaviour you think they all engage in.)
- Now each stick your sticky note onto this drawing of a person.
- Look at all the sticky notes.
- What do you notice? Sometimes we can have so many assumptions about others that it makes it difficult to see what they're really like. In our heads, they become the image we have of them.
- For a moment, let's think about the group of people we were reflecting on:
 - How might they feel? What might make it hard for them to engage with people who are different from them?
 - What might they think of us?
- We've thought about what we assume about this group. Is there one step we could take to get to know someone from that group better?
- If you have an idea, say it aloud and remove your sticky note from the figure.



Note to host: For some, encountering someone on the other side of a divide might be too big a step to take now. Encourage participants that this is a process. By simply identifying the person/group and the problem, they have been curious and have considered the divide. Remind them of the word 'yet'. They might not feel able to cross the divide now, but that doesn't mean that they will never feel able to cross the divide. Some people may have already tried to cross a divide and found the person on the other side unresponsive or unhelpful – sometimes we need to step back and offer this situation to God.



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- It's normal for human beings to stick with people similar to ourselves. We often find ourselves in echo chambers – but this can lead to or reinforce presumptions and prejudices about those who are not like us.
- It can be difficult to look beyond our own opinions about someone and wonder what life is like for them.
- Our reactions can build a wall between us and others (sometimes these may not be fair or justified).
- This wall can become so high we stop seeing the person on the other side – we only see the image we've created of them.
- Simple actions can help us overcome the assumptions we make about others and help us recognise everyone's high value and worth (all made in the image of God).
- In this activity, we have been curious – asking questions to discover more about ourselves and others.

Sanctuary

 00:00



Vision board

 **5 mins**

Guide your group through this activity using the instructions below:

- 1.** Draw or stick a brick on the vision board.
- 2.** Inside the brick, write the action you thought of to encounter the person/group on the other side of your 'wall'.



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 asking questions and wondering about another person's experiences.

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

We think about the stories we have heard about encountering others different from ourselves.

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

We think about the things we have learned about crossing divides in this session.

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

In Jesus' name. Amen

Notes

Session 3

Navigating Disagreement

Compact 35 mins

In-depth 60 mins

Custom

Session overview

<div> Intro p66 5 mins Summary of what this session is about</div>			
<div> Film p66 5-10 mins Young people’s perspectives on navigating disagreement</div>			
<div> Bible story p67 10-20 mins Jesus and the woman at the well (John 4:3-42)</div>			
<div> Bible verse p68 5-10 mins Luke 6:31</div>			
<div> Shrug, shout, shhh p69 5-10 mins Light-hearted activity exploring responses to conflict</div>			
<div> Agree or disagree? p70 10-25 mins Discover our responses to disagreement and build empathy</div>			
<div> Blind spots p77 5 mins Consider how ‘blind spots’ affect our disagreements</div>			
<div> Cancel culture p78 5-10 mins Discussion on impact of ‘cancel culture’</div>			



Vision board

Reflect on this session

p80

5-10 mins



Prayer and reflection

Reflect on the learning and habits

p81

5 mins



Session summary:

Key learning

Jesus shows us that 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
- Emoji signs for your group [**Optional** – if you do **Shrug, shout, shhh** activity]
- A photo of a rear view mirror [**Optional** – if you do **Blind spots** activity]

Set up your room:

- For the **Agree or disagree?** activity, you will need space for the young people 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 p71 and p73 – choose and tailor these for your group.

Intro

 00:00

 5 mins

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 can be 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.

Story

 00:00


Film

 5-15 mins

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

Option 1



Bible story

Jesus and the woman at the well (John 4:3-42)

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 on p130. You could invite young people to take on the roles.



Questions for discussion:

- Did Jesus and the woman avoid difficult topics or express their differences? Where do you see this?
- 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 p68.

Option 2

Slide 7



Bible verse Luke 6:31

Share the verse:

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



Questions 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?

Slide 8



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

🕒 5-10 mins

Shrug, shout, shhh

Light-hearted activity exploring the ways we instinctively respond to conflict

Start here



1

Tell your group that you're going to share some topics of disagreement with them and ask them how they respond.

2

Using the slide, show them three emojis to represent their possible reactions:

Shrug – I don't care much about this



Shout – I want to debate this!



Shhh – I go quiet



3

Read out the following scenarios and ask the young people to hold up or act out the appropriate emoji for each one.

- You and your friend disagree about what film to see at the cinema.
- Your parent or guardian tells you that you should be doing your homework when you're exhausted at the end of a long day.
- Someone in your class says that male footballers should get paid more than female footballers.

- Your friend tells you that your favourite singer/band is worse than their favourite.
- You find out that your parent or guardian votes for a political party you don't like.
- Your friend says they don't believe in climate change.



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- This activity is about noticing our responses – not judging them or thinking that one is better than another.
- Most of us find conflict challenging.
- We each respond to conflict in different ways. Some common responses include: wanting to avoid conflict, seeking confrontation, becoming defensive, wanting to talk it out.



Activity

Agree or disagree?

10-25 mins

Discover how we respond to different perspectives and how we can generate empathy for those we disagree with

Start here



Step one: Light-hearted statements

1

Select a couple of light-hearted statements from the list below:

- Pineapple belongs on pizza.
- 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.

2

Read out the statements and ask the group:

- Decide if you agree or disagree and then move to the sign that says 'Agree' or 'Disagree'.
- If you have a strong opinion, stand right next to the sign – if not, stand closer to the middle of the room.

3

Invite one or two people from each side to explain their view (depending on how much time you have).

4

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?

- How did you feel if you didn't get to feedback, did not getting to share your view impact how you listened to the other side?
- 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 other aspects of this person as they shared their view? *"If they believe that, then they probably also think this" "If they like pineapple on pizza I bet they also like maple syrup on bacon"*
- If they disagreed with you, what was your body language, did you feel defensive, arms crossed, or was your body language leaning in, open, wanting to listen?



Key learning

Please highlight the point below:

- 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.

Step two: Polarising statements

5

Read a polarising statement from the list below and invite the young people 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.

6

Invite two people from each side to explain their view. (Remind the young people to think about how they are listening.)

7

Say:

Now imagine it was someone in a position of power on the other side of the room from you e.g. a teacher, parent/carer, politician or church leader.

- What impact does that make?
- Do you feel empowered to share your view? Would you need extra support?
- Would you still question their view like you would a peer?
- Do you think they are interested in your view?



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- It's helpful to notice the impact of power dynamics on conflict.
- It can be hard to disagree well if one person or group in the disagreement is less empowered to express their feelings and views.
- If we are the ones with power in a situation, we need to pay special attention to how we use that influence and to how we take a genuine interest in the other's perspective.

Step three: Step into the other person's shoes

8

Read another polarising statement from the list and invite the young people to move accordingly.

9

This time, instead of asking volunteers to share their opinion, ask all the young people to move to the exact opposite position.

10

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:**
 - 'What experiences, relationships or beliefs may be influencing their view?'
 - 'Where do you think the person that holds this opposite view might be coming from?'

i Note to host: If some participants struggle with this step, encourage them that it can be challenging to imagine someone else's perspective. Invite them to listen to others in the group

11 Ask for a volunteer from each side to explain the opinion that is opposite to theirs, and the reasons behind that opinion.

Note: Model an example here for your group.

12 Ask the volunteer:

- How does it feel to try and understand the opposite point of view?

Step four: Think about a disagreement in your own life

13 Standing where they are, invite the young people 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 they can think of in this short time.

Note: Give an everyday example of your own which demonstrates to the group at what level to share.

14 Invite the young people to spend a moment quietly reflecting on their own view:

- What do you think and feel? Reflect on your own perspective. What has led you to have this view and perspective?

15

Now invite the young people 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, they won't need to move much!)

Note: *Be ready to help those who might struggle with this. Help them to understand their own point of view and the emotions associated with that that. Then explain what the opposite position might be. Chat about why a person might think that.*

16

As they did earlier, invite the young people to 'step into the shoes' of the view they disagree with - invite them to try and empathise with the other person:

- 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.
- 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.



Activity Blind spots

🕒 5 mins

Start here



1

Show the young people a picture of a rear-view mirror in a car (you may also want to illustrate by bringing in a mirror and demonstrating a 'blind spot').

2

Ask:

- Do you know what a blind spot in a car is?
- What have blind spots got to do with how we approach disagreements?



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- In disagreement, it's helpful to notice our own motives and desires because these affect how we interact with others.
- We may have preconceptions, misunderstandings, prejudices or lack awareness.
- A 'blind spot' may also be something that we do because we always have done, or which we have never thought to question.



Activity Cancel culture

🕒 5-10 mins

Explore the impact of cancel culture

Start here



1

Share these quotes with your group:

- *"Cancelling people pushes them away and makes them more likely to find spaces where bad views are the norm... Cancel culture, as I see it, involves the shutting down of different perspectives."* (Matt Haig)
- *Being called out has made me a better person. Not being cancelled has enabled me to be accountable, learn from my mistakes, and go on to share those lessons with others and do good with my privilege."* (Jameela Jamil)
- *"[Cancel culture creates a] culture of accountability which... needed to come into being."* (Lisa Nakamura)

2

Ask your group for their views on cancel culture and on these quotes.

- Do they agree or disagree?
- Online disagreement can be confrontational and may lack nuance. Are there more constructive ways to have a conversation about the disagreement?



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- We live in a culture in which it is difficult to sustain relationships when we disagree.
- If you have experienced online trolling or being cancelled, that is a difficult thing to go through. We're here if you want to talk about it further.



Vision board

🕒 5-10 mins

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. 'people shout', who people hang out with, what they post on social media, the opinions they share, the clubs they attend) – write these in the part of the iceberg above the water.
 - What things might be happening that are harder to see? (e.g. life experiences, feeling afraid or hurt, someone's hopes and dreams) – 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.
- 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 in 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

End of session 3

Session 4

Pursuing Justice

Compact 35 mins

In-depth 60 mins

Custom

Session overview

<div> Intro p84 5 mins</div> <div>Summary of what this session is about</div>			
<div> Film p84 5-10 mins</div> <div>Young people’s perspectives on pursuing justice</div>			
<div> Bible story p85 10-20 mins</div> <div>Jesus and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)</div>			
<div> Bible verse p86 5-10 mins</div> <div>Micah 6:8</div>			
<div> You be the judge p87 10 mins</div> <div>Explore what justice looks like through some light-hearted examples</div>			
<div> What would you do? p88 10-20 mins</div> <div>Discover different examples of injustice and how we respond</div>			
<div> Newspapers p92 10-20 mins</div> <div>Identify where there is injustice in our world today</div>			
<div> Vision board p94 5-10 mins</div> <div>Reflect on this session</div>			
<div> Prayer and reflection p95 5 mins</div> <div>Reflect on the learning and habits</div>			

Session summary:

Key learning

The Bible shows us that justice is an important part of peacemaking

Application

Recognise the existence of injustice in the world and join with others in pursuing a just and flourishing world

Habits focus

Reimagine the possibilities when we join with others to pursue a just and flourishing world

Before the session

You will need:

- Newspapers (go through them beforehand to check that there's nothing that would be inappropriate for your group)
- Scissors
- Glue
- Paper and pens
[Optional – if you do **You be the judge** activity]
- Colourful paper for the vision board activity in **Sanctuary**
- Your group's vision board

Set up your room:

- During the **Newspapers** activity, your group will gather round the vision board

i Important: Remember that 'justice' and 'injustice' will mean different things to different members of your group. There may be people in your group who experience systemic injustice every day or whose stories are heard less often than others'. There may be others in your group who are less aware of injustices in the world around them, particularly if their lives haven't been directly affected by them.

Intro

 00:00

 5 mins

Aim of the session

This session is called **Pursuing Justice**.

In this session we are going to:

- Recognise the existence of injustice.
- Explore how we respond to situations of injustice.
- Practise reimagining by discovering the power of coming together to pursue a just and flourishing world.



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.

Story

 00:00


Film

 5-10 mins

Discuss: What do we learn about justice in this film?

You might like to draw out examples of the following: the power of coming together; seeking hope; telling a new story.

Choose either Option 1 or Option 2

Option 1



Bible story

🕒 10-20 mins

Jesus and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)

Read the retelling of the passage to your group on p132. (You may like to invite young people to take on the roles in the story.)



Questions for discussion (choose as many as your group have time for):

- In what ways had Zacchaeus contributed to injustice?
- Zacchaeus gives half his money to the poor and repays those he's cheated four times as much. Is this a fair response? Why is making amends an important part of justice?
- How do you think Jesus' actions help Zacchaeus to change his behaviour?
- Who had power or influence in this story?
- What does this story have to say to situations in your own life?



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- Zacchaeus had treated people badly and misused his powerful position within the Roman tax system. By changing his behaviour, Zacchaeus was challenging the unjust system he was part of.
- The experience of being seen by Jesus, even though he had done things wrong, helped Zacchaeus find the courage to put things right.
- When Zacchaeus made amends for the injustice he contributed to, he was able to be part of his community again.
- Also draw on the **Key learning** from the Bible verse on p89.

Option 2

Slide 8



Bible verse Micah 6:8

🕒 5-10 mins

Share the verse:

“[W]hat does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (NRSVA)



Questions for discussion:

- What do you think it means to ‘do justice’? (The Message describes this as ‘do what is fair and just to your neighbour’)
- Why is it important for us to ‘do justice’?
- What have kindness and humility got to do with justice?

Slide 9



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- Doing justice is about treating others well and pursuing a world where everyone can flourish.
- The way we pursue justice matters – we should seek to challenge injustice but not to harm other people.
- Humility encourages us to listen deeply to those who have experienced injustice and to recognise when we get things wrong.
- We can sometimes feel awkward about naming injustice for fear of offending another person – this verse shows that doing justice and being kind can go together.



Activity

You be the judge

🕒 10 mins

Explore what justice looks like through some light-hearted examples

Start here



1

Give out pieces of paper and pens. Ask the young people to:

- write a silly 'crime' on one piece of paper (e.g. eating the last biscuit but leaving the packet in the tin or taking someone else's phone charger without asking)
- write a 'punishment' for that crime on another piece of paper (e.g. having to buy biscuits for everyone or having no mobile phone charge for a week)

2

Fold up each crime and put the papers into one bowl; do the same with the punishments and put them in the other bowl.

3

Ask a volunteer to pull out one crime and one punishment.

4

The volunteer reads them out and all the participants, as a group, chat about if the punishment fits the crime or not. Hold a vote to decide if the punishment is appropriate.



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- You may encounter different or conflicting perspectives on justice and injustice. This may be shaped by our experiences.
- In the Bible, justice is about much more than crime and punishment – it involves right relationships between people and calling injustice out when people who are vulnerable or less powerful are treated badly.
- In this activity, you may have noticed decisions that felt unjust or unfair. We might also experience this in our everyday lives. There are ways to speak up about this and advocate for justice. This may include speaking to people in power and campaigning for just and fair systems.



Activity

🕒 10-20 mins

What would you do?

Discover different examples of justice and injustice, and how we respond to them

Start here



1

Use the slides to show these scenarios to your group. Ask them for their responses and how they arrived at them.

Scenario one

You visit your gran's house and scoff down a massive doughnut you find in the fridge. You then discover from your mum that your gran has been saving it for her tea.

Do you:

- a) Own up immediately?
- b) Say nothing and hope she doesn't notice?
- c) Leave the wrapper and a smear of cream in the dog's bowl and try to blame Rover?
- d) Buy your gran another doughnut and try to put it in her fridge without her seeing?

Scenario two

Your mate brings a new player to football club. You think he says that her name is Dani, but when you call her that, she looks at you weirdly. Then you realise that your mate might have said 'Sammy' or even 'Jenny'.

Do you:

- a) Never speak to her, pass the ball to her or even acknowledge her existence?
- b) Ask her what her name is and then apologise if you got it wrong?
- c) Think of a nickname for her and attempt to get everyone to call her it?
- d) Sneak up to your mate and ask her what her name is and then write it on your hand so you don't forget?

Scenario three

You go shopping and get a load of new clothes for not very much money. Then you see a video on TikTok about the collapse of a factory in Cambodia, a factory which made garments from the shop where you bought your new clothes.

Do you:

- a) Take the clothes back and ask to speak to the manager?
- b) Do nothing – Cambodia is thousands of miles away and you don't know anyone who lives there?
- c) Do nothing, but feel guilty about it?
- d) Find out about the supply chain of the shop and what their policy is about workers' rights and modern-day slavery?

Scenario four

Your mate gets stopped leaving a shop by a security guard, who asks to see their receipt for what they've got in their bag. They look humiliated and outside the shop they tell you that this is the third time this has happened to them this month, even though they've never stolen anything in their life.

Do you:

- a) Work together to start a campaign about the discrimination your friend has experienced?
- b) Tell them they're making it up – it's never happened to you?
- c) Tell them to forget about it. If they've never stolen anything, they've got nothing to worry about?
- d) Go back to the shop and demand an explanation from the security guard?

2

Use these questions to unpack your group's responses:

- If you could see there was an option that seemed the right thing to do, was it easy to choose that option?
- Did you think of other ways to act in each situation? What would you have done differently?
- What stops us from challenging injustice in the world, especially if we are part of the problem?



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- Justice is an important part of building a world where everyone can flourish.
- Some of these examples may feel very familiar – others may be quite different from anything you've experienced.
- While we might not cause an injustice, we have the power to respond in ways that reinforce or challenge injustices.



Activity Newspapers

🕒 10-20 mins

Identify where there is injustice in our world today

Start here



1

Share out the newspapers, magazines, paper, scissors, pens and glue.

2

Invite participants to look at the newspapers and magazines and find headlines or pictures that show issues of justice or injustice in the world.

Ask your group to cut these out and stick them on to the vision board.

3

Gather participants around the large piece of paper and invite them to reflect on what they see, using some of these questions:

- What injustices do you notice?
- What are the causes of these injustices?
- Who has the power to help stop these injustices?
- What does this tell you about power and injustice?
- How do you feel when you see these?

4

Share this quote from Nelson Mandela: **"We can change the world and make it a better place. It is in our hands to make a difference."**

Explain that, although there are many injustices in the world, when we come together we are able to bring hope and change. There is injustice but there is also hope.

5

One way of pursuing justice is to speak to those in powerful positions about what is happening to those who are impacted by the injustice. You can do this through campaigning, writing letters to your MP or speaking to/emailing your favourite brands and manufacturers about whether they have fair policies. When many people take simple actions together, big change can happen.

6

Ask the young people to share anyone they know who has inspired them by joining with others to bring positive change in the world.



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- The stories in these newspapers reflect the fact the world isn't as it should be – injustice and inequality are real.
- We cannot fix everything but we can do a little bit of good where we find ourselves.
- By coming together, we can make a positive difference. This is reimagining – pursuing hope of a better future by joining with one another.
- Sometimes it can take a long time for injustices to be righted.
- God is at work to renew the whole world. We look forward to a day when there is justice – 'the last will be first and the first will be last' (Matthew 20:16).



Vision board

🕒 5-10 mins

Guide your group through this activity using the instructions below:

1. Give out a piece of paper to each person in your group.
2. Place your hand on the paper and draw round it. (If your group is small enough, the young people could draw round their hand directly on the vision board.)
3. Inside the hand, complete the sentence: 'I long for a world where...' (e.g. '...where young people's voices are heard', '...where climate change is stopped').
4. Cut out the hand and stick it on the vision board.
5. One person writes the title 'We long for a world where...'



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- There is power in coming together in our shared hope to see justice and peace in the world.
- Pursuing that better future together is an act of reimagining.



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 read this aloud:

Loving God, fill us with your Spirit now.

We think about the stories we have heard about the transformation of injustice.

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

We think about what we have learnt about recognising the injustice experienced by many.

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

We think about the things we have learned about pursuing justice in this session.

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

In Jesus' name. Amen

Notes

End of session 4

Session 5

Practising Forgiveness





Compact 35 mins

In-depth 60 mins

Custom

Session overview

<div> Intro p99 5 mins</div> <div>Summary of what this session is about</div>			
<div> Holding on p99 2 mins</div> <div>Short activity symbolising forgiveness Letting go</div>			
<div> Film p100 5-10 mins</div> <div>Young people's perspectives on forgiveness</div>			
<div> Bible story p100 10-20 mins</div> <div>Jesus and Peter on the beach (John 21:1-19)</div>			
<div> Bible story p102 10-20 mins</div> <div>The prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32)</div>		or 	
<div> Bible verse p103 5-10 mins</div> <div>Ephesians 4:32</div>			
<div> Stepping into the Bible story p104 10-20 mins</div> <div>Audio reflection on the story of Jesus and Peter on the beach</div>			
<div> Letting go p106 5 mins</div> <div>Short activity symbolising forgiveness Holding on</div>			
<div> Myth-busting p107 5-10 mins</div> <div>What forgiveness is and isn't</div>			

	Would you forgive? (films) Use film clips to discuss when to forgive	p109	10-20 mins
	Would you forgive? (scenarios) Use scenarios to discuss when to forgive	p110	10-20 mins
	Vision board Reflect on this session	p113	5-10 mins
	Prayer and reflection Reflect on the learning and habits	p114	5 mins

	✓ or ✓	
✓	✓	
✓	✓	

Session summary:

Key learning

God invites us to discover the power of forgiveness, which is both complex and transformational

Application

Recognise a hurt and try to see if a better relationship is possible

Habits focus

Be present by recognising hurt. Reimagine the possibilities of relationship where forgiveness is lived out

Before the session

You will need:

- Paper clip/pebble/paper
[Optional – if you do **Holding on** and **Letting go** activities]
- A sign saying 'Would' and a sign saying 'Wouldn't'
[Optional – if you do **Would you forgive?** activity]
- Your group's vision board

- A clip from a film or TV show about forgiveness, a screen and speaker to show the clip(s) if you do the **Would you forgive?** (films) activity. Some possible clips include:
 - **Spider-Man and the Sandman, Spider-Man 3 (2007)** – the Sandman had killed Peter Parker’s uncle; Peter discovers the reason why and forgives him.
 - **Thomas and Peter Rabbit apologise to Bea, Peter Rabbit (2018)** – Bea blames Thomas for blowing up the rabbit burrow, but it turns out Peter was the one who pressed the button.
 - **Shrek and Donkey, Shrek (2001)** – Donkey and Shrek both feel badly treated by one another, but they have an important truth-revealing conversation which helps to heal their relationship.

For links to these, scan the QR code.



Set up your room:

- Put the signs saying ‘would’ and ‘wouldn’t’ in different areas of the room – the young people will move between them.

i Important: Exploring the idea of forgiveness can be profound and valuable but it also has the potential to draw out reminders of painful experiences. Therefore, it is important to approach this topic with sensitivity. Participants may have experienced significant trauma and it is important that the session feels as safe as possible for everyone. Your role is not to tell anyone that they should forgive a particular person or a particular situation. No-one should feel compelled to forgive — suggesting that we should forgive someone who has harmed us can be traumatic in itself. The activity exploring what forgiveness is not is particularly important here. It may be helpful to focus on ‘small forgiveness’ (the forgiveness of minor wrongs) as a way of understanding the value and benefits of forgiving.

Be prepared in case the session draws out painful emotions. The young people need to know that they can take a break if they need to. If a young person discloses anything which raises a safeguarding concern it is vital that you respond to this in accordance with your church/organisation’s safeguarding policy.

Note: *If you are doing compact sessions of around 35 minutes, consider running two sessions focusing on Practising Forgiveness, as this will allow your group to explore the theme in more depth.*

Intro

 00:00

 5 mins

 Slide 1

Aim of the session

This session is called **Practising Forgiveness**.

In this session we are going to:

- Explore the idea of forgiveness – what it is and what it is not.
- Recognise the complexity of forgiveness.
- Practise reimagining by seeing how our relationships can be transformed by forgiveness.



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.

 Slide 2




Activity Holding on

 2 mins

A simple activity illustrating the power of forgiveness

*(This activity links to the **Letting go** activity later in this session)*

- Ask each person to find a small object that they can hold easily in one hand (e.g. paper clip, piece of scrunched-up paper).
- Challenge them to hold on to this for as long as they can while you continue with the rest of the session. (Explain that the point of this will become clear later on!)

 Slide 3



Film

🕒 5-10 mins

Discuss: What do we learn about forgiveness in this film?

You might like to draw out examples of the following: recognising a hurt; saying sorry; finding hope.

Choose either Option 1, Option 2 or Option 3

Option 1



Bible story

🕒 10-20 mins

Jesus and Peter on the beach (John 21:1-19)

Read the Bible story with your group. (You may like to invite the young people to take on the roles of Jesus and Peter.) It is important you give them the context that this is the first recorded meeting between Peter and Jesus since Peter pretended (three times) not to know Jesus, just before Jesus' death.

Note: If you choose this Bible story, there's an additional reflective activity you can do on p104.

Questions for discussion:

- How do you think Peter felt at the start of the story?
- Have you ever felt like Peter?
- Where do you see forgiveness in the story?
- How does Jesus give Peter a new perspective and a new way forward?



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- Peter takes a courageous step in moving towards Jesus.
- Jesus forgives Peter but goes one step further – he trusts him and invites Peter to take on the task of leading the Church. It can take time to rebuild trust and may not happen immediately.
- Jesus' and Peter's conversation is not easy – forgiveness can be complicated and messy.
- Jesus gives Peter the opportunity to have a future which is not determined by his past mistakes – this is an example of reimagining.
- Also draw on the **Key learning** from the Bible verse on p103.

Option 2

Slide 8



Bible story

🕒 10-20 mins

The prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32)

Read the retelling of a parable told by Jesus to group on p133.

(Young people could take on the roles of the father and sons.)



Questions for discussion:

- Where do you see forgiveness in the story?
- Which character do you find it easiest to understand or identify with?
- We don't know if the older brother forgave his younger brother in the end or not. What do you think would have made it easier for him to forgive and make a fresh start with his brother?

Slide 9



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- When the younger son decided to seek his father's forgiveness, this meant changing direction and stopping the behaviour that was hurting others.
- The father's decision to forgive was a free choice, not under pressure.
- The older son names the hurt that he is feeling and has an honest conversation with his father. This is an important part of being present.
- We may identify with different characters at different times. Sometimes hurts are done to us – sometimes we hurt others. Recognising this can stop us judging others unfairly.
- Also draw on the **Key learning** from the Bible verse on p103.

Option 3



Bible verse Ephesians 4:32

🕒 5-10 mins

Share the verse:

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” (NIV)



Questions for discussion:

- Is forgiveness important in friendships? Why/why not?
- What do you think about the idea that God forgives? What does that mean?



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- God is kind and compassionate and forgives us – we are invited to respond by forgiving others.
- Being kind does not mean pretending nothing has happened – it is good to recognise a hurt has been done to us.
- Forgiving others – doing good to them – doesn’t mean trust is restored but it does mean the cycle of hurt can stop. It may take time to rebuild trust.
- Sometimes we are the ones who are asked to forgive – sometimes others are asked to forgive us and it is for us to say sorry. Recognising this can stop us judging others unfairly.



Additional activity

🕒 10-20 mins

Stepping into the Bible story

An opportunity to reflect on forgiveness
prayerfully through our imaginations

Start here



Note: This activity will work best if you read the story of Jesus and Peter on the beach earlier in this session.

1

Tell your group that this activity is about 'stepping into' the story of Jesus and Peter on the beach.

2

Using the QR code, play your group this audio which is a reflection on the Bible story of Jesus and Peter on the beach.



Scan here! ➡

3

Read the following questions, giving the young people time to think silently about their answers (they may also like to write or draw):

- 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? What about the way you see your relationship with Jesus? What about the way you see your relationship with others when they let you down?

4

After allowing time for silent reflection, bring the group back together and chat about these questions:

- What surprised or struck you as you reflected on this story and thought about the questions?
- What did forgiveness mean here? Are there any words or phrases that came to mind as you thought about the story and about how you felt?



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- Forgiveness is not easy – whether we are forgiving or being forgiven.
- Sometimes the most we can do is pray and ask God to help us want to forgive someone who has hurt us.
- When forgiveness is possible, it can have great power to heal and release us, opening up new possibilities.



Activity Letting go

 5 mins

(This activity links to the **Holding on** activity earlier in the session)

- Ask young people if they are still holding on to the object they started holding at the beginning of the session.
- **Ask:** If you have already let go of the object, why is that?
- Invite those who haven't yet done so to let go of the object.
- **Ask:** What does it feel like to let go of this object?



Key learning

Please highlight the point below:

- Choosing to let go of hurt and resentment is not just a gift to the other person – it can be liberating and a release for you too.



Activity Myth-busting

🕒 5-10 mins

Explore what forgiveness is and is not

Start here



- 1 Challenge your group to come up with a definition of 'forgive' together.
Now look up 'forgive' in a dictionary.

- 2 **Discuss:**
 - Which is a better description - the one we came up with or the one in the dictionary?
 - If that's what forgiveness is, what is forgiveness *not*?

- 3 **Optional extension of this activity:**

Tell the young people:

Archbishop Desmond Tutu was a South African priest and activist and his daughter Mpho Tutu is also a South African priest and activist. They wrote a book together exploring forgiveness. In that book, they explain that there are five things that forgiveness is not.

- 4 Using the slides, show your group the sentences (also included below), which have the underlined words missing.

5

The young people get into teams to complete the sentences — the fastest team wins!

- Forgiveness is not **[easy]**, it takes **[hard work]** and **[determination]**.
- Forgiveness is not **[weakness]**, it takes **[courage]** and **[strength]**.
- Forgiveness is not the same as **[letting someone off a punishment]**, but it does mean not seeking **[revenge]**.
- Forgiveness is not **[forgetting]**. We can only **[let go]** of the past if we bravely **[remember]** it.
- Forgiveness is not **[quick]**, it can take **[a long time]**.

6

Talk through the answers together, with an opportunity to discuss the group's responses.



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- Sometimes there is a misconception that forgiveness is about brushing hurt under the carpet – it is the opposite. Forgiveness involves naming the hurt.
- Forgiveness is not the easy option but it can transform our relationships.
- Forgiveness is an important part of our everyday relationships – so that the hurt from the past can be addressed and we can see if a better future for the relationship is possible.

Choose either Option 1 or Option 2

Option 1



Activity

Would you forgive? (films)

Think through situations when we feel forgiveness is or is not appropriate

🕒 10-20 mins

Start here



Before the session:

- Find one or two clips from movies or TV shows on forgiveness (examples on p98).
- Put up signs saying 'Would' and 'Wouldn't' in two different areas of the room.

1

Play the video clip (explaining the context of the clip first).

2

- Invite the group to imagine that they are in the shoes of the person being asked to forgive.
- Ask participants to move to the appropriate sign that reflects whether they would or would not forgive.
- Ask a couple of people for feedback on why they chose that position

3

Once they have finished, open up a group discussion. You might want to draw out some of the following themes:

- Does forgiveness require an apology?
- What if the person who has hurt us is not sorry, or unwilling to apologise?
- What if someone in a position of responsibility isn't willing to say sorry?
- What makes it difficult to say sorry?
- Are there times we should forgive?



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- We've seen how forgiveness is presented in a film – this can be oversimplified, unrealistically quick and not representative of the way things are.
- Forgiveness is complex – we will not all respond in the same way to the same situations.
- Saying sorry and forgiving is an important part of our everyday relationships and friendships.
- Making amends for hurt caused can help trust to be restored.
- Forgiveness doesn't always mean maintaining proximity with the person who has hurt us.

Option 2

An alternative to the film clip activity



Activity

Would you forgive? (scenarios)

Think through situations when we feel
forgiveness is or is not appropriate

🕒 10-20 mins

Start here



1

Read out each of the scenarios on the slides to your group (also included below).

- A good friend accidentally breaks something that belongs to you. The thing they broke was really special to you and your friend is very sorry.
- Someone you don't know very well at school loses their temper with you; they are not sorry. Later you find out that a member of their family is unwell.
- Your boyfriend/girlfriend was seen holding hands with someone else. He/she denied it at first but has now said sorry.
- Your two-year-old younger brother was sick on your favourite shirt – it is stained and ruined.
- You and your best friend have fallen out. You have both done things wrong but neither wants to say sorry first.
- You are very badly injured in a car accident. The driver whose fault it was died in the accident.
- Your house is broken into, and a lot of your possessions are stolen. The burglars are never caught.
- In an important cup match someone on your team commits a foul. The other team get a penalty and your team loses.
- A family member has a big birthday coming up. You had planned to get them a present, but you carelessly spent all your money on yourself. Now you feel really guilty.

2

Ask the young people to share aloud - or note down – if they would or would not forgive, with an explanation for why/why not.

3

Once they have finished, take some examples and discussion. You might want to draw out some of the following themes:

- Does forgiveness require an apology?
- What if the person who has harmed us is not sorry?
- What if someone in a position of responsibility isn't willing to say sorry?
- What if they are unable or unwilling to apologise?
- Are there times we should forgive?



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- Forgiveness is complex – we will not all respond in the same way to the same situations.
- Saying sorry and forgiving is an important part of our everyday relationships and friendships.
- Making amends for hurt caused can help trust to be restored.
- Forgiveness doesn't always mean maintaining proximity with the person who has hurt us.



Vision board

🕒 5-10 mins

1. Ask your group to write the definition of 'forgive' that they came up with on the vision board.
2. Reflect silently:
 - Is there anyone that you would like to say sorry to?
 - Is there anyone that you would like to forgive?
3. Remind your group how to access support if anyone is finding any of this difficult and would like to talk further about forgiveness.
4. If you haven't used it earlier, you might like to share the following quotation from Archbishop Desmond and Rev Mpho Tutu:

Forgiveness is not easy, it takes hard work and determination.

Forgiveness is not weakness, it takes courage and strength.

Forgiveness is not the same as letting someone off a punishment, but it does mean not seeking revenge.

Forgiveness is not forgetting. We can only let go of the past if we bravely remember it.

Forgiveness is not quick, it can take a long time.



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 thank you that you love and forgive everybody.

We think about the stories we have heard about forgiveness.

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

We think about what we have learnt about recognising a hurt.

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

We think about the things we have learnt about forgiving and seeking forgiveness.

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

In Jesus' name. Amen

End of session 5

Notes

Session 6

Belonging Together

Compact 35 mins

In-depth 60 mins

Custom

Session overview

<div> Intro p118 5 mins</div> <div>Summary of what this session is about</div>			
<div> Film p118 5-10 mins</div> <div>Young people’s perspectives on belonging and interconnectedness</div>			
<div> Bible passage p119 10-20 mins</div> <div>1 Corinthians 12:15-22,26</div>			
<div> Interweaving stories p122 15-25 mins</div> <div>Explore what justice looks like through some light-hearted examples</div>			
<div> Belonging p124 5-10 mins</div> <div>Reflecting on quotes about belonging and interconnectedness</div>			
<div> Vision board p126 5-20 mins</div> <div>Reflect on this session</div>			
<div> Prayer and reflection p127 5 mins</div> <div>Reflect on the learning and habits</div>			

Session summary:

Key learning

God has made us interconnected - we need one another in order to flourish

Application

Have a high value of ourselves and others

Habits focus

Reimagine a world where all can flourish

Before the session

You will need:

- A ball of string
 - Your group's vision board
 - A ball and bucket
- [**Optional**– if you do the illustration on p120]

Set up your room:

- For the **Interweaving stories** activity, your group will ideally sit in a circle

Intro

 00:00

 5 mins

Aim of the session

This session is called **Belonging Together**.

In this session we are going to:

- Recognise the value of each one of us and the unique contribution we have to make.
- Explore how we are connected to each other.
- Practise reimagining by celebrating the ways our uniqueness and differences can enrich one another.

This session draws deeply on the idea of ubuntu — see Appendix 12 on p134.



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.

Story

 00:00


Film

 5-10 mins

Discuss: What do we learn about belonging in this film?

You might like to draw out examples of the following: the power of coming together; seeking hope; telling a new story.



Bible passage

1 Corinthians 12:15-22, 26

🕒 10-20 mins

Share the passage (the version below is from the NlrV translation):

Suppose the foot says, "I am not a hand. So I don't belong to the body." By saying this, it cannot stop being part of the body. And suppose the ear says, "I am not an eye. So I don't belong to the body." By saying this, it cannot stop being part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, how could it hear? If the whole body were an ear, how could it smell? God has placed each part in the body just as he wanted it to be.

If all the parts were the same, how could there be a body? As it is, there are many parts. But there is only one body. The eye can't say to the hand, "I don't need you!" The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you!" In fact, it is just the opposite. The parts of the body that seem to be weaker are the ones we can't do without...

If one part suffers, every part suffers with it. If one part is honoured, every part shares in its joy."

🗣️ Questions for discussion (choose as many as your group have time for):

- What do you think the writer (St Paul) is trying to say here?
- What do you think of the image of a body being used to describe a community?
- What would change if we all recognised our need of one another?
- Do you see similar principles and values in other faiths, worldviews or cultures and community traditions?

Note: If your group struggle to imagine the picture of the church being like a human body, you might want to introduce more practical examples such as this simple interactive illustration:

Create a simple 'machine' of five people moving a ball from one side of the room to the other. Each person has a specific function.

- **Person One** picks up a ball and drops it into a bucket held by Person Two.
- **Person Two** turns to Person Three and offers them the bucket.
- **Person Three** picks the ball out of the bucket and throws it over their shoulder.
- **Person Four** catches the ball and passes it to Person Five.

If all five people try to do the job of Person One, the result is there is no one to hold the bucket! The machine no longer works. In order to function, we need each other, and we need the differences of one another.



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- We are each unique, with a contribution to offer that only we can make.
- We need one another in order to flourish.
- When we experience differences, disagreements or divides in a friendship it can feel like hard work. But other people are actually a gift – we and the world would be poorer without them.
- It may be helpful to share one of these quotations from Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who describes the idea of 'ubuntu':

Either:

"Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness...

I can be me only if you are fully you. I am because we are, for we are made for togetherness, for family. We are made for complementarity. We are created for a delicate network of relationships, of interdependence with our fellow human beings, with the rest of creation.

I have gifts that you don't have, and you have gifts that I don't have. We are different in order to know our need of each other. To be human is to be dependent."

or

"I am human because I belong, I participate, I share."



Activity

🕒 15-25 mins

Interweaving stories

Experience our interconnectedness and need of one another

Start here



1

Ask the group to sit or stand in a circle.

Explain that the group will have a theme to discuss. They will take it in turns to say what they associate with the theme – it could be an experience, an opinion or something else. They don't need to have any deep knowledge or expertise.

2

Give the group a theme to discuss, for example:

- Hope
- Flourishing
- Travel
- Social media
- Local fast-food place, local café
- Sport

Note: *This isn't a long activity so choose a topic which your group can discuss comfortably in a short period of time without opening up painful experiences which cannot be explored fully here.*

3

Ask for a volunteer to start and give them the ball of string.

The young people take it in turns to share their reflection on the theme. The other young people practise the habits of being curious and being present – seeking to understand others and listening deeply.

The young person who catches the ball of string holds onto a piece before throwing it to the next person (they could wrap the string around their hand or waist), then pass the ball of string to the person who wants to speak next. Over time the string will weave together.

5

After a few minutes, draw the conversation to a close and ask the group to reflect on the discussion and the image of the web that their discussion has created. What might this web represent?

For example:

- It was created by everyone
- Without different people in different positions, the web could not have been created
- We need one another in order to create something
- Everyone collaborated and built on the suggestions of others to create a stronger conclusion
- We are often more interconnected than we think

If you have time, repeat with another topic.



Key learning

Please highlight the points below:

- Everyone has a contribution to make.
- Our individual understanding is incomplete without the perspectives of others – God has made us to be interconnected.
- Our diversity and differences are a strength to value and celebrate – and they reflect the beauty of God’s creation in all its variety.
- Our stories are interwoven.
- In this activity, we have been:
 - **Being curious** – seeking to understand others.
 - **Being present** – listening deeply to others’ contributions.
 - **Reimagining** – seeing our perspective and understanding grow through joining with others.



Activity Belonging

⌚ 5-10 mins

Discussion, reflecting on quotes about belonging and interdependence.

(Alternatively you could read these out whilst standing collectively holding the web – and not do the discussion if time is short.)

Start here



1 Ask the group to reflect on one of the following quotes:

- "I am human because I belong, I participate, I share."
(Archbishop Desmond Tutu)
- "Today, if we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other - that man, that woman, that child is my brother or my sister." (Mother Teresa)
- "Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness...

I can be me only if you are fully you. I am because we are, for we are made for togetherness, for family. We are made for complementarity. We are created for a delicate network of relationships, of interdependence with our fellow human beings, with the rest of creation.

I have gifts that you don't have, and you have gifts that I don't have. We are different in order to know our need of each other. To be human is to be dependent."
(Archbishop Desmond Tutu)

2 **Ask:**

What do you think of these ideas? What difference would it make if we put these ideas into practice?



Key learning

Please highlight the point below:

- Being interconnected means that we flourish when we come together and when we value the uniqueness of each person.



Top takeaway

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

What is something you want to remember from this session?

(Give the group a minute to reflect before answering.)



Vision board

 **5-20 mins**

In this final session, use this time to invite your group to reflect on what they have learnt and explored throughout the course by looking at the vision board.

- 1.** Invite the group to share what they have most valued from the course.
- 2.** Ask a volunteer to write the three habits across the vision board.
- 3.** Invite each young person to say (or write on the vision board) one action they would like to take in order to practise the three habits:
Be Curious, Be Present, Reimagine.



Prayer and reflection

Please use this as a prayer or guide for reflection:

Loving God, fill us with your Spirit now.

We think about the fact that our stories are woven together.

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

We think about our need for one another if we are all to flourish.

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

We thank you for weaving us into your story and inviting us to join together in your work in this world.

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

In Jesus' name. Amen

Feedback

We hope you and your group have enjoyed *Difference*! Now that you've finished, make sure your group complete a feedback form. Visit difference.rln.global/feedback or scan this QR code.

Scan here!



End of session 6

Appendix



Jesus and the woman at the well

A retelling based on John 4:3-42

The sun was high in the sky as Jesus and his friends approached the town of Sychar. His friends, the disciples, looked around warily. They were travelling from Jerusalem back home north to Galilee, but to get there, they had decided to go through Samaria, the land of the Samaritans. Jews and Samaritans did not get on.

They needed lunch, so the disciples went to the town to get some food. Jesus sat down by a well to rest. It was hot and he was tired.

A woman came to the well. Unusual... as most people would avoid the heat of the middle of the day.

The Samaritan woman looked at Jesus nervously and then lowered a bucket down into the well.

"Will you get me a drink of water?" Jesus asked.

The woman stopped what she was doing. Was this man really talking to her? She wasn't meant to talk to men who weren't her family, but her curiosity got the better of her.

"You're a Jew," she said. "I'm a woman. A Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for water when our two peoples will have nothing to do with each other?"

"Well," replied Jesus. "There are two things you don't know: what God wants to give you and who is asking you for a drink. If you did, you'd be asking me for the water that gives life."

The woman looked at Jesus. He didn't even have a bucket. "Where are you going to get this life-giving water?"

"Everyone who drinks this water—" Jesus gestured at the well "—will get thirsty again. But the water I have will give you eternal life. You'll never be thirsty again!"

The woman almost dropped her bucket. She exclaimed: "Give me some of that water!"

Then I'll never have to come to this well again!"

But then Jesus changed the subject: "Go and get your husband," he said.

Oh no. Should she lie or tell the truth? She'd been divorced and abandoned so often, she'd almost lost count.

She hesitated and then said: "I don't have a husband."

"That's right," said Jesus. "You don't. In fact, you've been married five times and the man you're living with is not your husband."

"You're a prophet!" she exclaimed. "My ancestors worshipped in one way, but you Jews say you can only worship in Jerusalem."

"You Samaritans don't really know who you worship," said Jesus, "but Jews do and God will use us to save the world. But now is the time when the Spirit is leading people to worship the Father in truth!"

"But we're waiting for the Messiah," the woman replied. "When he comes, he'll explain everything to us."

"I am the one you are all waiting for – Jews and Samaritans. The Messiah," Jesus said.

Just then, the disciples returned. They were shocked to find Jesus talking to a Samaritan woman. But they didn't say anything. They had already seen Jesus have surprising conversations, ignoring social boundaries and stepping into the unknown (or so it seemed to them).

The woman threw aside her bucket, pushed past the disciples and ran through Sychar, telling everyone in the town that she had found the Messiah. And a lot of Samaritans put their faith in Jesus, because of what the woman said.



Jesus and Zacchaeus

A retelling based on Luke 19:1-10

The city of Jericho was alive with the buzz of someone special passing through. It seemed like everyone was talking about him – a teacher called Jesus. Even Zacchaeus, the tax collector, had heard the rumours of Jesus' visit. Greedy little Zacchaeus.

Zacchaeus had sold out to the Romans, or so everyone in Jericho thought. He collected the taxes on behalf of the unpopular Roman government. Not only was Zacchaeus a collaborator with the Roman rulers, he was a cheat. He used the cover of his Roman guards to demand more money than the Romans wanted. And he kept the extra for himself.

Well, the rumours were true – Jesus arrived. But the crowds were so large and Zacchaeus so short that he couldn't see a thing. So he decided to shin up a tree to try and get a better look.

When Jesus got to the tree, he looked up and saw Zacchaeus, dangling there in the branches.

"Zacchaeus! Come down! I want to stay with you today!"

Zacchaeus clambered down the tree, scraping his knees and elbows as he went. And he welcomed Jesus into his house.

The crowd was in uproar!

"Zacchaeus is a sinner!"

"Jesus is actually going to his house!"

"I can't believe it!"

But, later than day, Zacchaeus emerged from his house and now proclaimed: "I will give half of all my property to the poor!"

What?

"I will pay back four times as much as I have taken from everyone I've cheated!"

People wondered, 'Is this the same man? Zacchaeus, the grubby little cheat?'

Jesus smiled and said to Zacchaeus: "Today you and your family have been saved. You are truly a member of God's people. The Son of Man came to look for and save people who are lost."

Lost people like Zacchaeus.



The prodigal son

A retelling based on Luke 15:11-32

One day the younger son went to his father and said: "I can't be bothered waiting until you have died. Give me my share of the inheritance now."

So the father divided all his property in two and gave half to his younger son. Soon afterwards, the younger son packed up everything and went to a foreign land. There, he wasted all his money on having a good time, until he had nothing left.

Then a famine hit the land. There was no food anywhere, but that didn't matter, because the younger son had no money to buy it anyway. Finally, he got a job feeding some pigs. Given half the chance, he would have gladly eaten the pigs' food, he was so hungry.

Finally, he realised what he had done: "The people who work for my father have more to eat than I do. I know, I'll go back home and ask my father for a job. I'll say: 'Father, I have done the wrong thing by you and by God. I'm not worthy to be called your son. Give me a job on your farm instead.'"

So he set off, retracing the steps he had taken months earlier, but no first-class travel this time.

His father had waited every day, looking out for the return of his son. While the son was walking home, still a long way off in the distance, his father saw him. He sprinted, running up to his son and throwing his arms around him.

The father was hugging his son so tightly that the son could hardly get out his apology. He finally got there in the end: "I am not worthy to be called your son." But instead of being sent away by the father, his dad ordered his workers to prepare a huge celebration.

"Bring us the best food! A new set of clothes! New shoes! Jewellery to wear!"

Meanwhile the elder son got home after a long day working in the fields. He heard the noise of the party coming from the house and he asked one of the workers what was going on.

"Your brother has come home and your dad arranged a massive party!"

The elder brother was so angry that he could barely speak, and he refused to go into the house. His father came out and begged him to join them, but his son shouted:

"I have slaved away for you for years. But this son of yours wastes half your money, then comes home and you throw him a party?"

The father looked at him, then said: "Son, you are always with me and everything I have is yours. But we should celebrate because it's as if your brother had died but has now come back to life. He was lost but now is found!"



Ubuntu

Throughout the *Difference* course, participants reflect on the preciousness of each person and the ways we can better reflect that in our relationships. Our uniqueness can sometimes bring friction until we learn to navigate our differences well.

Session six, **Belonging Together**, focuses on our deep interconnectedness alongside the unique worth of each one of us. These ideas of our unique worth and our interconnectedness – and their importance to the work of reconciliation – were explored in depth by Archbishop Desmond Tutu through the lens of ubuntu:

‘In our African weltanschauung, our worldview, we have something called ubuntu. In Xhosa, we say, “Umntu ngumtu ngabantu”. This expression is very difficult to render in English, but we could translate it by saying, “A person is a person through other persons”. We need other human beings for us to learn how to be human, for none of us comes fully formed into the world. We would not know how to talk, to walk, to think, to eat as human beings unless we learned how to do these things from other human beings. For us, the solitary human being is a contradiction in terms.

Ubuntu is the essence of being human. It speaks of how my humanity is caught up and bound up inextricably with yours. It says, not as Descartes did, “I think, therefore I am” but rather, “I am because I belong.” I need other human beings in order to be human. The completely self-sufficient human being is subhuman. I can be me only if you are fully you. I am because we are, for we are made for togetherness, for family. We are made for complementarity. We are created for a delicate network of relationships, of interdependence with our fellow human beings, with the rest of creation.

I have gifts that you don’t have, and you have gifts that I don’t have. We are different in order to know our need of each other. To be human is to be dependent.’¹

‘Ubuntu teaches us that our worth is intrinsic to who we are. We matter because we are made in the image of God. Ubuntu reminds us that we belong in one family – God’s family, the human family.’²

Ubuntu reflects the fact that we need one in other in order to flourish. But it also contains within it an invitation to a deeper humanity with one another, in pursuit of a just world for all. As Archbishop Tutu explains:

'In traditional African society, ubuntu was coveted more than anything else—more than wealth as measured in cattle and the extent of one's land. Without this quality a prosperous man, even though he might have been a chief, was regarded as someone deserving of pity and even contempt. It was seen as what ultimately distinguished people from animals—the quality of being human and so also humane.

Those who had ubuntu were compassionate and gentle, they used their strength on behalf of the weak, and they did not take advantage of others—in short, they cared, treating others as what they were: human beings. If you lacked ubuntu, in a sense you lacked an indispensable ingredient of being human.'³

This is a powerful invitation to all young people as they end the course in session six, looking ahead to how they can shape the world for the better.

¹ Tutu, Desmond, *God is Not a Christian*, Random House, 2011, p22.

² Ibid, p24.

³ Ibid, pp22-23.

Notes



NIV

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