

difference.

The power of faith
in a conflicted world

Difference is a five-session course that explores following Jesus in a complex and divided world.



Vision

Navigating a divided and complex world can be hard. We encounter this in our relationships, in our communities and in our wider systems and structures. Many of us long to make a difference, but often we don't know how to respond or where to start. This is why we brought together leading practitioners and thinkers to create *Difference* – a five-session course equipping you to cross divides, navigate disagreement and pursue a just and flourishing world.

The course

This course is designed for both large and small groups, meeting online or in-person. Each session is designed to last 90 minutes and explore the following themes:

- 1 God's Call**
- 2 Crossing Divides**
- 3 Navigating Disagreement**
- 4 Practising Forgiveness**
- 5 Risking Hope**

Each session includes:



Films of people who have faced conflict, division or a difficult relationship



Gospel accounts from the life of Jesus



Interactive exercises



Prayer



Discussion

Three habits

Drawing deeply on Jesus' encounters in the Gospels and the wisdom of expert peacemakers, we have distilled three habits that can transform everyday relationships. The course gives participants the chance to develop the habits and start applying them to their own lives.



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

Seek to value and understand the other and explore the limits of our own stories.

| **Every person is made in the image of God** (*Genesis 1:26–27*).



Encounter others with authenticity and confidence.

Build trust with others by engaging our whole selves in honesty, humility and vulnerability.

| **Our encounters with others are inseparable from our relationship with Jesus** (*Matthew 25:31–46*).



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

Offer everything back to God, and allow him to lead us into forgiveness, courage and creativity.

| **God is making all things new** (*Revelation 21:5*).

Why habits?

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.

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

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

'When I cultivate forgiveness in my small everyday encounters, I am preparing for a time when a much larger act of forgiveness will be asked of me, as it most certainly will... I don't just forgive a particular act; I become a more forgiving person.'

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

Running the course

Running the course is simple and transformative, for those leading and participating. We call those who lead the course 'hosts'. At least one host from each group needs to have completed the 'Introduction to *Difference*' module from our online training and resources hub. This short training gives hosts everything they need to prepare and run each session, including all the materials for the course, key skills, and top tips.

After the course

To transform relationships, we don't need a new 'to-do' list or just another course. *Difference* develops habits that change how we act in the long term. To keep going in the face of setbacks, we will need a community around us who identify the same call and practise the same habits.

We encourage that in two ways:

1 Re-gathering

We suggest groups meet together around a month after the final session and, if possible, regularly thereafter - to share stories of hope and challenge, dig deeper into their shared commitments and reimagine how God is at work through them. We provide a basic resource to support a Re-gathering.

2 Stay connected

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

🖱 difference.rln.global ✉ hello@rln.global

📷 [difference.rln](https://www.instagram.com/difference.rln) 📘 [@DifferenceRLN](https://www.facebook.com/DifferenceRLN)



About us

The *Difference* course has been created by the Reconciling Leaders Network (RLN), a registered charity committed to mobilising a generation to live out their calling as peacemakers and reconcilers, for a just and flourishing society.

Being a reconciler is an essential part of following Jesus, which is why the Church is called to be a reconciling presence in the midst of conflict. We believe that the fracture and division in our world cries out for people committed to reconciliation, whose actions and words show that a new and better way is possible: we need reconciling leaders. This is a call to every one of us, whether we think of ourselves as 'leaders' or not. We also believe that there is power in interconnection and that together we are so much more than the sum of our parts.

RLN DIFFERENCE IS A PART OF THE
RECONCILING LEADERS NETWORK

Session info

The course enables participants to develop habits through its session structure:

Story

Listening to stories from someone who has faced conflict, division or a difficult relationship, and a Gospel account from the life of Jesus.

Space

Putting the habits into practice through an interactive exercise or guided reflection.

Sanctuary

Spending time in God's presence, asking God to be at work as the group reflect on how to apply the session to their everyday context.

1 God's Call

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

God is at work to renew and reconcile all things and he calls us to be caught up in what he is doing. We live in between the wholeness that God intended in the beginning and the ultimate restoration of all things, of heaven and earth, which we are promised. We have a calling in the here-and-now to bring hope (and to be hope!) in a messy and complex world. Following Jesus means really loving our neighbours and our enemies. It means allowing God to open our eyes to those places where relationships with God, ourselves, our community and the earth have broken down. And it means letting him lead us, one step at a time, into the heart of the divides which he can transform.

This session includes:

- The biblical call to Christians in a divided and complex world (Matthew 5:5-9)
- Setting parameters for group culture: encouraging honesty, sensitivity and ways of relating well to one another
- Interactive exercise to explore the three habits and the stories we bring

2 Crossing Divides

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

It is easy to distrust and feel wary of those who are different from us. We often find ourselves in echo chambers, surrounded by voices that reinforce our own perspective. It is increasingly easy to avoid or shut out those who make us uncomfortable or fearful, creating a dividing wall between us. But we are called to something different, to a curiosity about others as people made in the image of God. This session is about responding to God's invitation to know ourselves better by seeing our walls and the people on the other side.

This session includes:

- The story of Sami from Bethlehem about overcoming walls between Israelis and Palestinians
- The account of Jesus meeting a Samaritan woman (John 4:1-30)
- Interactive exercise about building and dismantling walls of prejudice

3 Navigating Disagreement

God is with us as we face the challenge of disagreement, which can become an opportunity for stronger relationships if handled well.

We all encounter conflict and it rarely feels comfortable. But we don't need to be overwhelmed by it. Jesus' example shows us that we can respond to disagreement with curiosity and generosity, without compromising our convictions. In fact, sometimes conflict can be an opportunity to deepen and strengthen relationships in ways we had never imagined. Jesus seeks to encounter the person behind the conflict, the issue or the label. Approaching disagreement in this way can change our experience of conflict and, ultimately, our relationships.

This session includes:

- The story of Mariam from London about navigating a family disagreement
- The account of the woman who washes Jesus' feet (Luke 7:36-50)
- Interactive exercise about disagreement and empathy

4 Practising Forgiveness

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

Jesus teaches again and again about forgiveness in the gospels. This suggests two things: firstly, that it is a crucial part of finding life in all its fullness; secondly, that it's pretty hard to get our heads around and even harder to live out every day. This session is about allowing ourselves to be excited by the possibilities of forgiveness in our relationships, while being honest about the places we get stuck.

This session includes:

- The story of Craig from Cape Town about acknowledging his part in an unjust system to a friend who had been hurt
- The account of Jesus and Peter on the beach (John 21:1-19)
- Guided reflection inviting participants to step into the Bible passage

5 Risking Hope

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

The kingdom of God is so transformative precisely because it is enacting something brand new which is often counter-cultural. But this doesn't always feel comfortable. We know that there are times when following Jesus in our relationships still feels like an uphill struggle. As we prepare for what's next, we need to know that we are called to be part of God's bigger story of restoration in the world and that God will resource us.

This session includes:

- The stories of Guvna B and Tom about communities that enable them to see change where there was brokenness
- The account of Jesus washing the disciples' feet (John 13:1-17)
- Interactive exercise about how the habits enable us to embody hope