

# difference.

The power of faith  
in a conflicted world

*Difference* is a 5 session course that explores what it means to follow Jesus in the face of conflict and see transformation through everyday encounters.



## Vision

Archbishop Justin Welby has a vision for the church to be a reconciling presence in the midst of conflict.

In a conflicted and hurting world, many of us long for our faith to have a positive impact, but in the messiness of life it can be hard to know where to start. We believe that God is in the business of restoring brokenness and transforming relationships, and that we are called to take part. Archbishop Justin has brought together leading peacemaking thinkers and practitioners to create a 5-session course to help you encounter others well, cross divides and see society transformed.

## The Course

This course is designed for church-based groups - large or small, new or well-established..

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

## The session includes:



**Films** – stories from Christians facing conflict



**Bible** – Jesus dealing with difference and division



**Interactive exercises**



**Prayer**



**Discussion**



**It is designed to last between 90 and 105 minutes**

# Three Habits

Drawing deeply on Jesus's encounters in the Gospels and the wisdom of expert peacemakers, we have distilled three habits that 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). Our fracture and mess can be holy ground where God is at work (2 Corinthians 12:9–11).



**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). We are new creations (2 Corinthians 5:16).

## Why Habits?

'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**

'What we do on a regular basis, we become... your habits get into your being; they shape your loves and longings – your heart'

**John Mark Comer**



## 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 attend one of our training days at various locations across the country. The 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 Regathering

We suggest groups meet 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 regathering.

### 2 Join the movement

We invite all hosts and participants to join a growing community of Christians who long to see their faith have an impact. They will receive ideas and inspiration for being curious, being present and reimagining and have the chance to meet with others who are practising these habits in very different contexts across the globe. It's a chance to learn from their stories and share your own, supporting the wider Church to transform relationships together.



## About us

RLN is a registered charity, established as part of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Reconciliation Ministry. We're committed to mobilising followers of Jesus 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. 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, together, we are so much more than the sum of our parts.

**RLN** DIFFERENCE IS A PART OF THE  
RECONCILING LEADERS NETWORK



ARCHBISHOP OF  
CANTERBURY'S  
RECONCILIATION  
MINISTRY

# Session Info

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

## Story

Listening to stories from the Bible and from Christians facing conflict today

## Space

Putting the habits into practice

## Sanctuary

Sharing with and listening to God, seeking his guidance, by the Spirit

## 1 God's Call

**God calls and equips us to see our relationships transformed in a conflicted world.**

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
- Setting parameters for group culture: encouraging honesty, sensitivity and ways of relating well to one another
- An opportunity for the host to share their own story about why it is important for them to run this course

## 2 Crossing Divides

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

In our society, it is easy to distrust and fear 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 – it as though it puts 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 Awad from the Holy Land 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 and fear

## 3 Disagreeing Well

God invites us to face conflict, knowing that it can be an opportunity for better relationships if handled well.

We all encounter conflict and it never feels comfortable. But we don't need to be paralysed 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 Debbie Ford from Cambridge about handling 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 Stewart from Cape Town about taking steps to ask for forgiveness from colleagues and friends
- The account of Jesus and Peter on the beach from John 21: 1-19
- Interactive exercise about a previous experience of forgiveness and how to make it a daily practice

## 5 Risking Hope

God's way of relationship will sometimes be costly and risky because the hope it brings is radical and 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 from London and Tom Herbert from Gloucester about communities that enable them to see change where there was brokenness
- The account of Jesus washing the disciples' feet from John 13:1-17
- Interactive exercise about practising habits when we are stuck