

ALL THE DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD

Aim

To explore our identity as the gathered and scattered church and then discover one another's frontlines so that you can pray for one another more meaningfully.

Recall your Sunday theme

Pray to start, then read 1 Peter 1:1–2, and recall the sermon together, asking what stuck with each person.

Sermon reminder

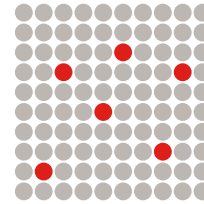
The sermon highlighted the two words that the apostle Peter used in his opening greeting to describe the church: 'elect' and 'exiles'. From Genesis 12 onwards, it's clear that God's purpose was that Abraham and all his descendants would be blessed and be a blessing to the world (Genesis 12:2–3). Writing to these early Christians, most of whom would not have been Jews by birth, Peter includes them in the ongoing story of God's intention by using the language of calling – 'chosen', 'elect'. Secondly, they're exiles. This term recalls the great disaster of the Old Testament – when Israel lost their land. At first, they hoped for a quick return, but the prophets told that first generation of exiles that they themselves would not return, though they could remain distinct and be a blessing where they were (Jeremiah 29). Elect and exiles. In using these words, Peter connected these Christians scattered around modern-day Turkey with the Old Testament people of God. We live in that same story. We may be a long way from these early Christians in culture and time, but we share the same legacy and mission.

Watch the film

Watch *Film 1 – All the difference in the world* (licc.org.uk/frontlinesundays) and discuss what struck each person.



The six red dots, out of 100 altogether, represent the approximate percentage of people in the UK who worship in a church once a month or more (6%). To the left, the red dots in the corner reflect us in the times we gather as a church community. To the right, the scattered dots reflect the times when we are apart, scattered in our Monday–Saturday lives.



Explore and discuss further

Take about 15 minutes on each section below, dwelling on the questions which are most helpful and insightful for your group.

Explore the gathered dots

- 1 What strikes you about the gathered red dots?
- 2 How does it feel to be a Christian minority in our nation?
- 3 Peter uses the word 'elect' to describe the Christians to whom he wrote, reflecting all that began in Genesis 12:2–3. Take a moment to read Genesis 12:2–3. (Note: the threat of cursing in verse 3 might sound harsh, but it shows God will protect Abraham and his people.) What do you think it meant for Abraham, and by extension Israel, to be a blessing?
- 4 How does this help us understand what God would want of us today?
- 5 Jot some of your blessing ideas down together.
- 6 How are you distinct as a gathered people of God? What do you believe that is different from the general population? What do you do that is different? (Note: Think about core beliefs and practices – prayer, giving generously, hospitality to strangers, Bible reading etc.) How do these help you 'stay red' together?

Explore the scattered dots

- 7 What strikes you about the scattered red dots?
- 8 What are the specific places where each person in the group is scattered in the week? What are our experiences of being a Christian there?
- 9 How distinctively Christian are we in those places?
- 10 Peter describes early Christians as 'exiles', referencing when God allowed Israel's enemies to defeat them, and force them into exile. In exile they had to learn to live as a distinct people. Jeremiah 29 was written to them, including the famous verse: 'I know the plans I have for you...' (29:11). But that verse follows God's command to 'Build houses and settle down, plant gardens... marry... seek the peace of the city... pray for it.' (29:5–7). How would that command have felt for devout Jews in exile?
- 11 How are Jeremiah's words relevant for us today?

Explore frontlines

Frontlines (n): Frontlines are the everyday places where we live, work, study, or play and where we're likely to connect with people who aren't Christians.

- 12 How helpful do you find it as a term? Why? Why not?
- 13 Read Ephesians 6:10–18. If 'frontlines' suggests battles to you, is it helpful to think of ourselves in a confrontation? If so, who is the enemy?
- 14 Read Philippians 2:14–16. If 'frontlines' refers to the everyday places where we do life and interact with non-Christians, what do the verses say about it?
- 15 Where do you think your frontlines are?
- 16 What might God's purpose be for you in each of these places?

Close in prayer

Peter begins his letter with the reassurances that:

- Our situations are known by God – his foreknowledge
- We have been set apart by the Spirit – his sanctifying work
- We can be confident of our relationship with God – the sprinkling of blood is a sign of being included in his covenant

As you pray for one another's situations, ask each person what you can give thanks for and what they want to ask God to do. Have each member of the group jot down a prayer request for themselves and one for someone else in the group and commit to praying for these through the next seven days.