

# TRUTH CENTERED TRANSFORMATION

## Practitioners' Guide

This is a training tool designed by Reconciled World.  
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# HOW IT ALL BEGAN...

**This story is not really about Reconciled World or what we did, but about God and what He did.** Our passion is twofold: to see the Church strengthened and to see people free from all forms of poverty. In 1996, I (Anna) began working with Food for the Hungry, whose vision is to “end physical and spiritual hungers worldwide.” An audacious vision, yes, but one that I was excited about. Because I was working in a country that limited Christian ministries, we were unable to have much involvement with the Church. While we celebrated many successes, we were not seeing lives transformed or communities moving out of poverty. The Bible seemed to promise so much, yet my experiences were less than dramatic.

In 1999, I attended a Vision Conference. This conference, now directed by Disciple Nations Alliance ([disciplenations.org](http://disciplenations.org)), introduced me to a new set of ideas about how we address poverty. Some key messages introduced at the conference included:

- The importance of the local church.
- The impact our beliefs have upon our behaviour and our level of poverty.
- God’s concern about every area of our life and His desire for every part of our life to be lived in obedience to Him.
- The importance of everyone, including the poorest, using what they have to love their community.

After attending the conference, I spent four years searching scripture and seeking answers. Can people overcome poverty simply by understanding God’s truth and living in obedience to Him? Scripture seemed to indicate it was true, yet when I asked around nobody could name any examples.

In 2003, I decided to test these ideas. My hope was to find ten churches that would partner with me. After a number of setbacks and much prayer and fasting, God eventually provided a volunteer to teach the churches what is now referred to as Module 1 (our first training). After I trained her to be our trainer, we were unable to meet for several months to discuss the results of her trainings. To my surprise, when we finally connected she had already taught 160 churches, rather than ten! Chaos, in the positive sense of the word, had broken out and many were pleading for further training.

After more prayer, we decided to employ six trainers from the various regions where our first trainer had taught. Our goal was to equip each of them to train the churches in their own area. Because I could not go to these areas for security reasons, my original trainer was responsible for traveling and selecting the new staff trainers. I was somewhere between shocked and horrified when I arrived to train the new staff members only to discover there were 16—not six! What had started as an experiment with ten churches—something easily contained—was now, within a few short months, more like an out-of-control fire.

The week following our first staff training, my husband and I retreated to the beach. As I swam laps, I begged God to show me what to do. I did not have the budget for 16 staff (or six for that matter), I did not know what I was doing, and I had no idea if it would work. For a person who likes high levels of control, this was anything but. It was at this point I realised the project really was going to be all about God. If He did not turn up and if His Word was not true, then we were on our way to a disaster.

Thankfully, God is real, much more faithful than I can imagine, and very true to His word. With God's help, we continued to write trainings, and the programme continued to expand rapidly. Some trainers, not understanding (or choosing to ignore) that we only wanted each of them to work with a maximum of ten churches, trained more than 50. Others complained that their areas had more than 120 churches, making it problematic to work with just a few. To help meet the demand, we



added 16 more staff within eight months of launching the programme. We now had over 600 churches receiving our training. It was terrifying.

Every time we met together as a staff, we would hear stories of churches acting on the training they had received. Many churches were reaching out to show God's love to their communities through what we call Acts of Love. We heard some incredible stories of how God had multiplied those simple acts of obedience to bring results none of us could have ever imagined. When I first started the programme, I envisioned the churches would do what they could with the resources they had. When the churches ran out of resources, we would come alongside them and help. I compared it to Jesus multiplying the loaves and fish found in Mark 6—start with what you have and see it increased. But as we were now working with more than 600 churches, it became obvious we did not have the resources to be the multiplying factor. I worried about what would happen when the churches ran out of resources. In my lack of faith, I had missed an important part of the story—it was God who multiplied the loaves and the fish. He was capable then and is still capable today. It was God who made great promises to the poor, and He is still faithful to those promises.

For the next few years, we developed and wrote more trainings, prayed fervently, listened to amazing stories, and worried about how these communities would ever move out of poverty. In many of the areas where we started our trainings, the community typically only had enough to eat for nine months of the year. Now we were asking them to give and share with others. We had not brought anything to the communities except training.

I was still questioning how this would turn out when, at a leadership meeting, one of the leaders started their update by saying: "In my area, the communities have been transformed and moved out of poverty." My initial desire (in case you were wondering just how little faith I had) was to assure her that it was impossible. After all, transformation takes a long, long time and probably will not really take place until Jesus

returns. Fortunately, I managed to swallow my doubts long enough to ask her for further details.

*“it was God who multiplied the loaves and the fish. He was capable then and is still capable today.”*



She shared how there were no more poor people in her area. Everyone now had enough to eat all year long. They all had stable houses, toilets, wells, and vegetable gardens. All children went to school and most people attended church. The people were passionate about God. They had strong, loving marriages, were no longer chronically sick, and knew how to treat most common illnesses. Since there were no longer any needs in their community, they served surrounding communities and

helped them with projects. I knew many of the stories from this area. There were times when they had prayed and seen miraculous provision, but also times when storms had wiped everything out, forcing them to rebuild houses and clear roads.

With time, we heard more and more similar stories of communities declaring they were no longer poor. We would even hear people talking on buses about the areas where we worked and how they had moved out of poverty.

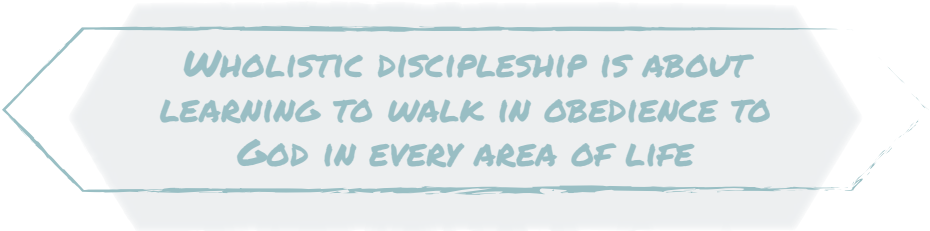
As we have tried to learn from what happened we have become more and more convinced about the importance of wholistic discipleship. Wholistic discipleship is about learning to walk in obedience to God in every area of life—not just going to church on Sunday and following basic moral principles, but submitting every area to God. It means that you recognise that your land belongs to God so you farm diligently, wanting to be a good steward of that land, seeking to provide for your family and for those who can't work. It means understanding that your body is important to God; it was made by Him, so, as a way to honor the gift He gave you, you need to practice good hygiene. Building on those truths,

we add skills, like how to use your land well and good hygiene practices.

As individuals and churches seek to walk in greater obedience to God in every area of their lives, we've seen God lift them up and move them out of poverty. In most areas we hear stories of miracles. Building supplies that are 'randomly' delivered to the church. Crops that grow in the midst of a drought. There is endless evidence that God multiplies the efforts of the poor as they walk in obedience to His word.

If you go to the many villages where we used to train, you will see that they are continuing to apply all that they learned. They continue to serve their neighbours, provide for those who can't provide for themselves, farm their land diligently, send their children to school, and so much more. If you ask them why they do all of this, they are confused. When pushed for an answer their only reply is, "Isn't this what a Christian does?"

In that statement—*Isn't this what a Christian does?*—lies the secret to the programme. It's not about helping communities move out of poverty, although we certainly hope that happens. Instead it's about teaching people to live as Christians should, recognising that the God who designed earth and humankind also knows how we best can live. The principles He has put into place do cause us to flourish.



WHOLISTIC DISCIPLESHIP IS ABOUT  
LEARNING TO WALK IN OBEDIENCE TO  
GOD IN EVERY AREA OF LIFE



# PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

## PREFACE

As we share this programme, we feel a level of concern. We would never want to imply that this programme by itself will transform lives. It will not. Transformation happens as people walk in obedience to God, understand His truth, and apply it to all areas of their life. This programme teaches people to realise and apply God's truth. However, it is God alone who produces multiplication and transformation. The real recipe for success includes prayer and fasting, seeking God, and daring to walk in obedience to Him even when it does not make sense. This programme is simply a tool—a very ordinary tool.

## WHOLISTIC DISCIPLESHIP

This programme is a little different from most. Our focus is wholistically discipling churches, rather than concentrating on development. One of our key goals is to see communities move out of poverty. However, our experience has shown that this has happened as a natural outflow of wholistic discipleship.

We define wholistic discipleship very simply as 'learning to walk in obedience to God in all areas of life.' For us, wholistic discipleship is made up of these four pieces:

- **Understanding how the Bible applies to every area of life.** For many, an unbiblical sacred-secular divide has impacted their thinking, leaving them believing that only the "sacred"—those things related to spiritual practices or moral issues—are important to God. Many Christians have little understanding of how their faith impacts areas such as health, family relations, agriculture, money management (aside from tithing), and work. As

people start to understand how the Bible speaks to each of these areas, they start to mature and change.

- **Truth.** Satan's lies—in the form of fatalism, superstition, hopelessness, and fear (to name a few of the most common)—often keep people from trying to change. The lie that Christianity is ONLY a way to get to heaven leaves many Christians with no vision for life on earth. We need to understand God's truth to really be disciplined and grow wholistically.
- **Skills training.** Even if a Christian understands they need to care for their health, they don't always know how. We offer training in areas such as health, marriage, parenting, money management, and agriculture to help Christians have the skills to do these things well.
- **God's intervention.** We understand that our efforts alone are not enough. However, as we try to obey God in all areas of our life, seeking Him, He will bring change to our communities.

## PROGRAMME OUTLINE

The programme has three goals, to see:

1. God glorified.
2. Churches strengthened and growing in number.
3. Communities move out of poverty.

To achieve these goals we focus on three main areas:

- Training
- Acts of Love
- God's Intervention

## TRAINING

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The programme consists of ten training modules for churches, which take place over five years. Each module includes multiple lessons that can be taught as 3-4 day trainings every six months, weekly Bible studies for ten weeks, or some method in-between. Our goal is to train as

many people at the church as possible, so we try to find the best training schedule to ensure that as many as possible can attend. The important thing is to space out the modules to one every six months. This provides churches time to apply the principles before they receive more training. We recognise that the trainings by themselves do not generate change. Rather, it is the application of these ideas and obedience to God that will bring transformation.

The modules are taught to churches by Local Facilitators. Most Local Facilitators are also pastoring a church. Typically Local Facilitators train one church (their own) to eight churches. Initially, Local Facilitators visit with each church two times between trainings, encouraging them to apply their new-found knowledge. As churches grow stronger and become more self-motivated, the number of visits is reduced.

Local Facilitators are trained by Master Trainers. Master Trainers are usually responsible for an area with 5–20 Local Facilitators. Their role is to train the Local Facilitators, help address any issues that may arise, and ensure that the training is being passed on to the whole congregation. If Reconciled World helps with training, then we train at the level of Master Trainers or above.

The objectives of the training are to:

1. Help churches to understand God's truth as it applies to every aspect of life and to overcome the lies that hold them in poverty.
2. Encourage churches to start reaching out to their communities, using the resources they have to demonstrate God's love to those around them.
3. Teach basic life skills in areas such as money management, health, agriculture, and marriage and family.

In addition to trainings and staff visits, we have a magazine that comes out twice a year. This magazine encourages the churches with stories and testimonies from other areas, reinforces the ideas in the trainings, and brings additional basic teaching. Often we hear stories of a church

that read a testimony of what one church did and then replicated that project in its own community.

## **ACTS OF LOVE**

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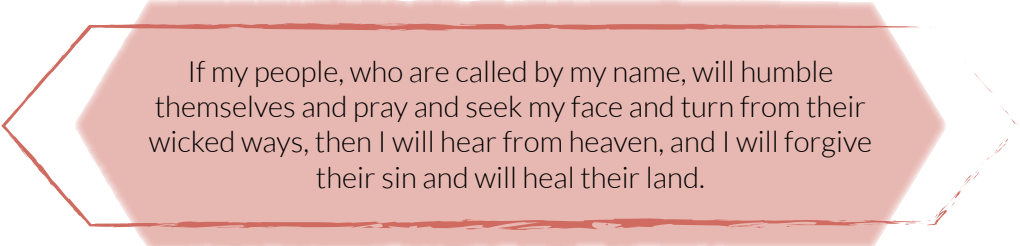
One key aspect of the programme is Acts of Love. From the first module, we challenge churches to reach out to their community to show God's love using their own resources. Often these projects start as something small, such as picking up litter or cleaning a water source. Over time they grow into larger projects, such as repairing or building roads, building homes, or digging wells.

Acts of Love are an important part of the programme. By doing them, churches start to break some of the key lies that hold communities in poverty. Lies such as we can't do anything ourselves, we need outsiders to help us, we can't give, we are hopeless, and it's not possible to change the future. As churches reach out, they experience the truths that God has given them resources, that they are capable, and that God is the source of their strength and provision.

## **GOD'S INTERVENTION**

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In reality, training and Acts of Love just aren't enough to transform communities. As shared in the background, we were confused to find communities moving out of poverty. But in every community, when we went to understand what had happened to transform them, we found stories of how God had multiplied their efforts, brought inspiration and creativity, or provided resources that were needed in unexpected ways. The programme hinges on 2 Chronicles 7:14, which promises:



If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.



Time and again, we have seen this promise to be true. Transformation comes, not so much from what the churches do, but from what God does as the churches seek to obey Him in all areas of life.

## **PROGRAMME PARTICIPANTS**

This programme is designed for those who have lived years in chronic poverty. It's not designed for those who face overwhelming oppression, such as slaves, or those who have just faced a natural disaster, such as a crippling famine or typhoon. In both of these cases, those with resources need to respond quickly to relieve the suffering, acting as Christ's hands and feet.

Thus far we have seen the greatest success in small, poor, highly collective, rural communities or tightly-knit, poor, urban communities such as a slum. As we partnered with churches in areas where the people are more individualistic, we have found the programme to have limited success (for example, in urban areas where there is not a clear geographic community and the people do not know each other well).

The programme is not designed for "richer" churches. While the principles that the programme is built on can be applied to any programme, this programme has NOT been designed to teach relatively rich people how to work with the poor. Rather, its focus is bringing God's truth to the materially poor. We desire to confront the lies the poor often believe, which hold them in poverty. We challenge them to walk in obedience to God, knowing that, as they do, they will see God's blessing on their lives.



# CORE PRINCIPLES

The TCT programme was developed on the basis of a number of core ideas or principles. In this section we briefly outline the core principles which form the foundation of the programme.



## DEPENDING ON GOD

No programme can transform people; only God can do that. In John 15:5, Jesus reminds us, “If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing.” As you seek to apply the TCT programme, resist the temptation to believe that following the programme steps will result in transformation. It will not. God is the one that brings transformation. The programme is just a tool to guide people to understand God’s truth and to challenge them to walk in obedience to that truth. The real secret for success is found in God alone.

The TCT programme emphasises dependence on God in two ways: (1) our own dependence on God and (2) allowing space for the churches to depend on God.

## LEADERS DEPENDING ON GOD

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As leaders, we need to remember to look to God and not to people for answers, for provision, and for help in overcoming challenges. We encourage you to develop a habit of prayer and fasting for the programme and to put together a prayer team. Who are those who will “hold up your arms” in prayer? Your most powerful tool as you do this programme is not the materials or the facilitators but prayer.

## CHURCHES DEPENDING ON GOD

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It is easy, when you see communities facing difficulties, to want to jump in and solve their problems. As outsiders to the community, we always

need to consider carefully whether we have the solution that God desires to this problem. Maybe God is about to do something. Maybe God is teaching the community or leaders something through this problem—like how to trust in Him. If we intervene too quickly, the community loses that opportunity to learn.

The story of the prodigal son challenges us because of what the father did not do. He did not pursue his son. He did not use his resources to coax him home. He did not send servants on a search-and-rescue mission. Instead, he waited. He waited until his son was ready to return. He waited until his son learned what God desired him to learn. The father's great love for his son was clear—he anxiously awaited his return and celebrated his homecoming. But if he had rescued his son, the son may not have changed in the same way. Struggles and trials can be healthy. We need to imitate the father's patience, remembering that it takes time for communities to overcome the poverty that has crippled them for so many years.

Inevitably the communities will face problems, but as we lead this programme we want to make sure that we always teach the communities to look to God for solutions. Encourage churches and leaders to pray and to seek God, asking Him what they should do next, and then taking action to obey what they believe God shows them. God's solutions are far beyond what we could provide or even imagine. (See story: Out of Debt)

One of the TCT modules deals with money management. A key element of this training is encouraging people to get out of debt. Almost everyone from the villages in the initial programme had large amounts of debt, and the interest they paid on that debt played a significant role in keeping them in poverty.



## OUT OF DEBT

Each training within the TCT program focuses on one main theme. In year three, one of the topics is money management. One of the key topics throughout this training is encouraging people to get out of debt. Almost everyone from the villages at this training has large amounts of debt and the interest they pay on this debt plays a significant role in keeping them in poverty.

At the end of the money management training we challenge the students to make a commitment to try to get out of debt. In one region a number of churches had completed this training and the students had committed to do all they could to get out of debt. They made plans with the goal of being debt free in the next five years.

That year the country had a terrible drought. When the students went to their fields they discovered that all their tapioca plants were brown and seemed to be dead. They met together to discuss what to do. Traditionally when the crops died the farmers would take huge loans to get them through the next year. However they were committed to getting out of debt. It seemed there was no hope of honoring that commitment. At each of the churches the farmers gathered to fast and pray and ask God what to do.

Finally it came time to harvest the crops. Even though the crops appeared to be dead, they decided to dig up the tapioca and see if any had survived the drought. As they dug up the plants they were shocked to discover that they did not have less than usual or even the normal amount of harvest. But instead, they all had two to three times the normal amount!

Furthermore, because of the drought, in every other area nearby the crops had all died. As a result the price for tapioca that year had more than doubled. The farmers in the areas where the churches had prayed did not just earn what they would normally earn but instead earned four to six times as much. As a result they were all able to get out of debt in just one year instead of the five years that they were expecting it would take.

At the end of the money management training in one region, a number of churches committed to do all they could to get out of debt. They made plans with the goal of being debt-free in the next five years.

That year the country had a terrible drought. When the people went to their fields they discovered that all their tapioca plants were brown and seemed to be dead. In past years, when the crops died the farmers took huge loans to get them through the next year. However they had committed to getting out of debt. It seemed there was no hope of honouring that commitment now. At each of the churches the farmers gathered to fast and pray and ask God what to do.

Even though the crops appeared to be dead, they decided to dig up the tapioca and see if any had survived the drought. As they dug up the plants they were shocked to discover that they did not have less than usual or even the normal amount of harvest. Instead, they all had two to three times the normal amount!

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What do you think will happen when the community faces another challenge?



## **NURTURING TRUTH AND CONFRONTING LIES**

Much of the world's poverty, oppression, and injustice is rooted in lies. Lies that have impacted our own beliefs, those of the poor, the society around them, and the systems that develop from a society that believes lies.

All beliefs have consequences. Our beliefs significantly impact how we behave. Behaviour based in truth leads to freedom and flourishing. Behaviour based on lies brings death and brokenness. All societies have some truth and some lies. Without truth they would self-destruct. However, the lies that are believed cause brokenness.

In the areas where we work, the lies that often hold people in poverty include:

- **We are born poor and will die poor.** In almost all the communities where we work, the people are fatalistic. They believe they are born poor and will die poor and that there is nothing they can do to change that. This belief holds people back from making any effort to try to change their future. Often, they do not believe the efforts they make will bring any result because their destiny has been set.
- **We are subject to the gods.** People often believe that gods or spirits (tree god, mountain god, river god, etc.) control everything. As a result, they believe the quantity of crops they are able to grow is dependent on luck and favour from the gods rather than hard work or any particular agricultural techniques. Likewise, illnesses are treated by going to the witch doctor and sacrificing animals, thus slowing their recovery and leaving the family in crippling debt from the cost of buying animals to sacrifice.
- **God only cares about spiritual matters.** Many Christians believe God isn't concerned with their daily life. To them, Christianity is about attending church on Sundays. Instead of understanding that the Bible gives us guidance on how we are to live in all areas of life, they continue to live as they did before they became Christians.
- **We are too poor to give.** For many who are poor, they only see what they do not have rather than all that they do have. Most believe that they are not required to give because this commandment is only for those who have an excess. Yet scripture makes no such distinction. God has promised to give to us in the same

measure we give to others (Luke 6:38). If we do not give, we will miss knowing God's blessing in this way.

- **We cannot do anything without outsiders to help us.** Many poor people feel overwhelmed by their poverty. They are unable to see the many resources God has given them, including their own creativity, resourcefulness, time, and energy. When mobilised, each of these gifts can help them make significant differences in their communities.
- **We are insignificant.** This belief prevents poor people from even trying to solve problems. For example, very few ever attend university, as it is perceived to be a place for important people and they do not feel important. However, as they begin to understand their value before God, they start to believe that they can also have dreams for the future.

These are just a few of the lies we've seen in our work with communities in chronic poverty. Furthermore, vulnerable people aren't only affected by the lies they themselves believe. The lies believed by society (such as that some people groups have less value) and even the lies believed by missionaries and development workers play a role in keeping people trapped in poverty.

Some of the common lies believed by those who want to help (and that God had to overcome in our own lives) include:

- **It takes big development projects to have a big impact.** Acts of Love seem insufficient in many ways. For the most part we feel that, if we are going to have a significant impact, we need large projects. However, that hasn't been our experience. Time and time again, God has taken simple obedience and caused significant impact.
- **The best solution to poverty is development projects.** Most everyone who's been involved in big development projects for a few years would admit that their projects are not bringing stunning life transformations. Indeed, if big development projects



could solve poverty, many countries would have risen out of poverty long ago. Yet we're still left assuming it really is the only way.

➤ **Poor people need help; they are lacking in every way.**

Obviously, poverty involves lack. However, what people trapped in chronic poverty need most desperately is not food or stuff.

God has not forgotten and neglected the poor; He has given them resources. What poor people so often need is the ability to see all their resources, and the skills to utilise them.

➤ **The church is broken.** The Bible tells us that the Church is Christ's bride and body, His chosen instrument for building His kingdom. As broken as churches may be, our response should be to seek their healing, not to exclude them. And as our experiences have taught us, imperfect churches seeking to obey God are able to completely transform their communities.

God has promised us that His truth will set us free (John 8:31-32). As we allow God to reveal the lies we have believed, and as the churches understand and begin to apply truth to every aspect of life, we will see God bring incredible change in communities.

*To learn more about how ideas have consequences, visit the Disciple Nations Alliance website ([coramdeio.com](http://coramdeio.com)).*



## INTEGRATING PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL

One of the great lies to affect the church is that of the sacred-secular divide—the belief that some things (our spiritual and moral lives) have greater importance to God than other things (agriculture, health, work...). However, the Bible teaches that everything belongs to God. Christ came to reconcile all that was broken in the fall (Colossians 1:18-20)—not only our relationships with God, but also our relationships with one another and with creation. The way we do anything, including how we eat and drink, should bring glory to God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Around the world, so many have only heard a narrow gospel message. They know they are to repent and believe, attend church, pray, and read their Bibles. But they have rarely heard how the Christian message impacts the way we work, parent, or care for others. As a result, there are many pastors and church leaders who neglect their families because they believe that ministry is far more important. There are widows and orphans who have no home, while the local church is busy with prayer meetings. God's people are called to display God, to make Him visible to the nations. As non-believers see neglected families and widows suffering, they are left seeing God as harsh, demanding, and weak, unable to help His own people. The community remains in poverty and God is not glorified.

The sacred-secular divide lie has also led us to offer “spiritual solutions” to “spiritual problems” and “material solutions” to “physical problems.” We have presented things like prayer and Bible reading as ways to glorify God and physical projects, such as a water system, as ways to improve our physical lives. Perhaps we try to “integrate” these by making sure that our programmes have both a physical and a spiritual component. For example we may have agriculture programme that includes a Bible study. But is that truly integrated?

An integrated approach gives us a new goal—glorifying God in all that we do. We as practitioners and those we seek to serve must understand **that all things should be done before the face of God for the glory of God.** Everything we do can and should be an act of worship. The goal of our programme and our lives is not self improvement but bringing glory to God.

As we strive to do that in the TCT programme, we focus on questions such as, “What would glorify God in this situation? What does God intend? If He was the leader of this community, what do you think He would change first? What would He do about the orphans and the widows amongst you? How can you respond?” Questions like these help people (including us) remember that everything we do is not about making a better life; it's about making God's name great.

As we seek to glorify God in all that we do, two key biblical truths help us to have a more integrated approach.

*"ALL THINGS SHOULD  
BE DONE BEFORE THE  
FACE OF GOD FOR  
THE GLORY OF GOD."*

## **LOVE**

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The Bible has a lot to say about loving both God and one another. In the Gospels, Jesus summarises the whole law and the prophets as, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and love your neighbour as yourself" (Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:28-31,33; Luke 10:27). Paul's summary solely uses the phrase "love your neighbour" (Galatians 5:14). It's a stunning simplification! If we were to look at the life of an average Christian and try to summarise into one phrase the message of scripture, what would we conclude? We probably would not conclude that it is "love your neighbour."

The motivation that we present to churches for why they should do projects is to love and serve their community, not to improve their own lives. The programme starts with small Acts of Love that can be done as a group. Again, these projects are done to show love to their community. In many of the areas we work, people in the church have little interaction with non-Christians apart from direct evangelism. However, as they do Acts of Love, they have seen God powerfully change the relationships in the community. Those who used to hate them admire them. Those that persecuted them now support them.

## **STEWARDSHIP**

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Another key truth is that God has given us so much and expects us to use it wisely. Therefore, our motivation in tending our fields well is not so much to have a good harvest and eat more but to be a good steward of all that God has given us. Psalm 24:1 reminds us, "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it." Nothing we have belongs to us—we are merely stewards of it. This includes our homes, land, crops and even our bodies. In our programme, we challenge believers to care for each of these things as if they belonged to God, because they do. For example,

God has given us homes and property to provide shelter and food for our families, not so we can leave them messy, unattended, or full of rotting litter. Based on the stewardship principle, we teach families to care for their property—doing things like cleaning the litter, trimming the long grass, and planting fruit trees and gardens. Today, people can spot the Christian areas because their homes are well taken care of and clean.



## MOBILISING LOCAL RESOURCES

We teach churches and individuals to use what God has given them to serve others. Asking this of poor, rural villages where families often do not have sufficient food to eat can seem absurd. What do they have to give? Why are we asking them to give?

God is very explicit in His desire for us to be a people that give (Luke 6:38). If we are not challenging the poor to give, then we are limiting their opportunity to experience the blessings God has promised to those who give.

As we teach this principle, we emphasise that the blessings are not promised to give us easy lives but rather to allow us to be generous on every occasion and bring thanksgiving to God.

*Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously (2 Corinthians 9:6).*

*Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for good will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God (2 Corinthians 9:10-11).*

Acts of Love are a way of teaching churches to give, to serve, and to love one another—all basic commandments. Some common Acts of Love we've seen are helping someone in the field for a day, repairing ditches in the road, and cleaning the water system to make it useful again. Through these simple actions, God can bring significant change. Relationships between the church and community are healed and the church changes their mindset—they no longer believe they need outsiders to solve their problems, but now understand they really are able to change the future. They can make a difference.

Within a year, churches typically progress from small, one-day projects to larger projects such as building houses, wells, bridges, or roads. These can have a significant impact on the community's development. For example, many villages have foot paths from their village to their crop area. When the church widens the path into a road, all the people in the community are able to harvest more crops and transport those crops to markets where they sell at a higher price.

Beyond Acts of Love, we mobilise local resources in a number of ways. We encourage facilitators to consider volunteering, we challenge churches to provide their own meals at trainings, and we help teach the leadership team how to raise funds in their own country. All this is driven not by the desire to save money, but from the belief that a major part of our discipleship is learning to steward wisely all that God has given us. In many countries, there has been little teaching on generosity and money. We believe it holds churches back from being all that they could be.



## PURSUING GOD'S WAYS

The Bible assures us that God's ways are not our ways; they are higher (Isaiah 55:9). As we run this programme, we seek to know God's ways, not to lean on our own understanding. In the same way we encourage the churches to obey God in all areas, we as leaders desire to be disciplined in our own thinking and behaviour.

This impacts the way we do many things. For example, we trust in the idea of the mustard seed—if we are faithful in doing small things such as an Act of Love, then God will grow it to have a big impact. The kingdom starts with the tiny, not with the big.

Pursuing God’s ways also causes us to see God’s kingdom built, rather than our own. To that end, we want to freely share this programme and support those who are looking to apply it in their area. We offer all our materials and advice freely. Naturally there is a cost for us, and if you wish to contribute, we do appreciate that. However there is no expectation that you will.

Likewise, we ask you to share freely of your experiences and translations. We have launched a membership area of the website that provides additional resources. There is no cost in joining this area. The purpose of a membership area is to help us to know who is accessing the materials and to look at how we can support each other better.



## **PARTNERING WITH CHURCHES**

The TCT programme is a church-training programme. It has been designed to work in churches. These need not be official or registered churches, but any group of people that meet together regularly (usually weekly) to worship and learn more about God.

There are a number of reasons that we believe in working with churches rather than community groups. The church is Christ’s body, so when the church works to love and serve, it uniquely displays His glory. If an individual or organisation goes out to serve the needs of a community, then the praise goes to the individual or organisation. When the church does, God receives glory. It causes people to ask questions about Christianity. The church becomes salt and light as it was intended to be.

Also we believe in working with churches because, at its heart, TCT is a

discipleship programme. The emphasis is on obeying God and depending on Him. It is within the church that people are best able to work together, pray together, and mobilise the gifts and talents that God has given them.

This principle has a couple of key implications:

1. **We need to train church members, not just pastors.** If you are training groups of pastors, be sure to follow up to make sure they are actually training their churches. The whole church needs to be committed to depending on God and being more obedient in every aspect of life, not just the pastor.
2. **We need to keep things simple.** It is tempting to add on to the training and go deeper with ideas. Remember that if you are really trying to target regular church members, many of whom might be illiterate, it is best to keep things very simple.



## SERVING THE VULNERABLE

This programme is designed to train those who are considered materially poor. It teaches truths that confront the lies that the poor believe and challenges them to use their own resources to serve those in their own community. The programme is not designed for more wealthy churches—it does not address how we, as the materially rich, need to work with the vulnerable.

The TCT programme seeks to remind vulnerable people that we are all called to love and serve others. We are all called to give; no one is exempt from this command. It may be that the older widow can help provide child care while others build a house and an orphan can use their energy to help collect grass for the roof.





# THE RESULTS

Remember, the programme has three key goals:

- ▶ God is glorified
- ▶ Churches are growing in maturity and number
- ▶ Communities are moving out of all forms of poverty

As we measure results, we look at the changes we have seen in each of these areas. The statistical results listed below are from the first mid-term evaluation of our initial program with 500 rural churches in Southeast Asia. We plan to update our statistical data mid-2019 after the first round of mid-term evaluations in Africa and South Asia.

## GOD IS GLORIFIED

When we say “God is glorified,” we mean that the community, the government, and the surrounding areas all know that God is the reason the community has changed.

Many of the areas where we first started the programme were hostile to Christianity. Christians were seen as dangerous, believing a foreign religion that was going to cause the whole community to suffer under the punishment of the spirits. Christians were largely isolated. They kept to themselves and tried to avoid problems.

Today, in almost all the original TCT areas, the people in both the community and government recognise that the Christian God is powerful and that Christians are good. They appreciate the Christian influence in their area. Instead of trying to stamp out Christianity, local officials are trying to promote it in areas with no Christians.

It's not possible to directly measure how much God has been glorified.

However, 94 percent of communities in the initial programme reported at mid-term that those in the community are much more open to the gospel, and 92 percent have seen the government go from hostile to supportive.

## **CHURCHES GROW IN MATURITY AND NUMBER**

### **Increased church attendance and passion.**

In many of the areas where we work, the people have been evangelised, and many have made a decision for Christ out of a desire to go to heaven when they die. However, few fully understand the gospel message. In extreme cases, some people who self-identify as “Christians” do not even know who Christ is. Their understanding of the gospel message is limited to, cut down your altar and you will go to heaven.

Church leaders often feel frustrated. They find that few people want to attend church and those who do are largely uninterested in the worship or teaching. As people learn more about God through TCT trainings, they begin to better understand the practical implications of biblical teaching for their lives. They start to walk in greater obedience to God. As they do, they see God multiply their efforts, which leads to a stronger faith and increased excitement about God. They see Him as real, loving, and involved in every aspect of their lives. Mid-term evaluations in the initial programme show that 89 percent of churches reported an increase in church attendance.

### **Increased giving and serving.**

At the start of the programme, most churches receive only a few pennies in their offering each week. However, as they grow closer to God and learn about giving and stewardship, Christians become eager to both tithe and serve. Mid-term evaluations in the initial programme show that 98 percent of churches saw a significant increase in tithing and 96 percent saw an increase in those willing to serve.

## **Increase in number of Christians.**

As relationships between the church and the community improve, there is often a significant increase in the number of people attending church. This results in more people becoming active followers of Christ or first-time believing Christians.

In numerous examples, such as the stories on page 31 and 37, as one person has come to Christ, many others have also made a decision to commit their lives to Christ. They would say, "If God is powerful enough to change this person, then we want to know that God."

## **COMMUNITIES ARE MOVING OUT OF ALL FORMS OF POVERTY**

### **PHYSICAL**

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#### **Increase in incomes**

In the initial programme, incomes increased by 5 to 10 times (and as much as 20 to 30 times. We saw several things contribute to this:

- **Roads:** As communities build roads to crop areas, the farmers no longer have to spend weeks carrying the crops on their backs to the nearest road. Consequently, they are able to harvest much more. The price per kilo for their crops is also higher, as the crops are fresher.
- **Labour costs:** Traditionally, farmers hold a large party with a lot of alcohol and food as a way to pay those who work in their fields. The cost of these parties is often close to or more than the profit on the crops, leaving the farmer in poverty. Now everyone serves one another, working in their fields without expecting any return.
- **Calculating profits:** As farmers learn how to calculate profits, they realise some of their farming activities make little or no profit and other activities actually result in a loss. Solely by changing what they grow or the animals they raise, farmers are able to increase their profitability.

- **No pre-selling of crops:** In the past, most people would “pre-sell” their crops prior to harvesting because they needed money. However, they would only receive about half (or less) of the crop’s market value. By improving their money management, the farmers are able to wait until the crops are harvested and sell at full price, immediately doubling their income.
- **Reducing debt:** It is common for rural farmers to borrow money, mainly from those who buy their crops. The interest on the loans is significant, often near 100 percent for a four-month loan. Most farmers, unable to calculate, have no understanding of the amount of interest they are paying. As one man said after calculating the interest, “But that’s a big number!” Through better understanding of loan costs and increased money management, many farmers are able to pay off their debts. In some cases, God also intervened to help them achieve their goal of living debt-free. (See Out of Debt)
- **Working diligently:** One of the principles we teach is work ethic. We should work in a way that brings glory to God. As farmers work diligently, weeding their land and caring for their crops, they see their average yield increase. Typically, the crop yield is at least double, sometimes increasing up to three or four times.

## Health

Another area of significant change is health. We teach that our bodies belong to God and are intended to be used to build His kingdom; we are only stewards. As families understand the importance of caring for their bodies so they are able to serve God, they quickly start to adopt a number of healthy practices. Some key changes we saw in the initial programme include:

- **Improved sanitation:** Prior to participating in TCT, only five percent of people in the communities had access to a toilet. After three years, that number had increased to 56 percent. By the final (six-year) evaluation, the number was over 80 percent. 83 percent of churches built latrines as an Act of Love.

## THE VIOLENT ORPHAN

In one community where Christianity was discouraged, there lived a very violent man. In fits of rage the man would often beat people including the police and government members for no apparent reason. The community lived in fear of the man and his aggressive behavior.

After studying our first module of training, the small church decided they would build a home for orphans in their community. A few days after they finished building the home, the violent man from the community showed up at the door of the church. Though unsure of his intentions, the church leaders allowed the man to enter. The man sat with them and shared his story. He, too, had been an orphan and struggled to survive, feeling alone and isolated inside. He was surprised to see that there were people who cared for orphans enough to build a house for them. He asked to be included in their work and to learn more about the love they showed. They shared more about Christianity with the man and he soon surrendered his life to Christ.

Quickly, his life changed dramatically. The man went from being known as a violent disruption in the community to a loving community member. As a result of his life transformation, 98 people have come to know Jesus in his community. In addition, the police and government officials were so happy the abuse was under control that they gave permission to the church leaders to build a church building. Today, the man continues to be involved in the church and is always one of the first to volunteer whenever the church is doing Acts of Love.

- **Improved hygiene:** Communities study a number of healthy practices, including washing hands, clothing, bodies, and vegetables. The changes are dramatic. Before we start training, only 16 percent of people washed their hands or body regularly; after three years of training, 87 percent report doing so. Before

training, only 13 percent report keeping their homes clean; after three years, 71 percent keep clean homes. 85 percent of churches built wells or repaired clean water systems in their communities. With improved access to water, families are better able to keep themselves and their homes clean.

- **Improved nutrition:** As families earn more income, they are able to eat more healthfully. Our health training teaches families how to plan nutritious meals. At mid-term evaluations, 85 percent of families were growing family vegetable gardens and fruit trees.
- **Improved medical knowledge:** Families study basic health knowledge, such as how to treat diarrhoea and fever. Even this simple knowledge has a significant impact. As one mother said, “Now when my children get diarrhoea, they don’t die.”

## Stable Housing

We have seen a significant increase in stable housing. In the initial programme, 91 percent of TCT churches built stable homes for the poorest families in their community. These simple homes are often made of mud, bamboo or wood materials that are easily accessible. Funds are raised for other supplies, such as nails and roofing materials. Most of the labour is provided by church volunteers, although at times specialists are hired. Those who receive homes usually help build their own home (if healthy enough), and also go on to help build other homes in the community.

## SOCIAL

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### Improved relationships with the community

In much of Asia, the Church often has a poor reputation and is rarely seen as a vital part of the community. As the Church starts to demonstrate God’s love towards their community, and especially the poor, the community starts to engage more with the Church. In the initial programme’s three-year evaluation, 96 percent of churches reported an improvement in their relationship with the community. As a result of improved relationships, non-believers often attend church to learn more about those who love others.

## **Improved family relationships**

Module 5 of our training is “Marriage and Family.” Historically, domestic violence is common, and many are surprised to hear it is wrong for a husband to beat his wife. As husbands are challenged to love their wives as Christ loved the Church, they start to serve their wives. Men report back that, as they helped their wives to fetch water or firewood, their wives were appreciative and no longer “hot-tempered.” As husbands love their wives through service and wives learn to respect their husbands, marriages grow stronger and happier. And as parents learn different techniques for parenting, they are able to raise their children in a more Christ-like manner, resulting in happier families. (See story: A Good Night’s Sleep on page 34)

## **Communities work together on projects**

Initially, community members tend to watch the church as it serves. They are confused by such strange activities. However, in most small rural communities where there is little happening, community members quickly realise the church is doing something beneficial for all of them. With time, non-Christian community members start to partner with churches to accomplish projects.

## **MENTAL**

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### **Children attend school**

Many communities do not have a school. In those that do, children typically only attend through the first few grades. Also, each year during harvest and planting seasons, they drop out to work in the fields. Through TCT, churches often take an active role in promoting education. Church members go from home to home, talking with parents and explaining why their children should attend school. In the initial programme, where many communities had no school, the churches often built one. The government typically provided teachers for these schools; when a teacher was unavailable, someone in the church who had the ability served in that role. Before TCT started, only 16 percent of children attended middle school; at mid-term, 78 percent were attending. The high school attendance grew from 5 percent to 30 percent.

## **A GOOD NIGHTS SLEEP**

In one community, many women were rising at 1 AM to start their daily routines. Before breakfast, the women would collect firewood, fetch water, and prepare breakfast for their family. After breakfast, they would work for hours in the field and take care of other household duties. Each evening, the women would return to their home exhausted from a long day's work with little energy to relax and enjoy time with their family.

After attending the marriage and family training, a few church leaders decided they wanted to start showing love to their wives by serving them. Though initially embarrassed by the idea, the men wanted to obey God in all areas of their life, including serving their wives. After much debate, they decided to rise before anyone else to avoid the embarrassment of others knowing they were helping their wives. The men awoke with their wives at 4 AM to help with the preparations of the day, allowing their wives three extra hours of sleep. The result was amazing! The women, feeling more rested and valued by their husbands, were able to put more time and energy into their families. This, in turn, created a much happier and peaceful household. Family members began spending more time together and the family grew stronger and healthier.

The community quickly noticed something had changed in these families and they started to investigate. It didn't take them long to find out the men had been waking at 4 AM, allowing their wives extra sleep. Instead of laughing at the men, they too started to change! Now, when the sun rises at 4 AM, so do the families in this community. Inspired by a few men of the church who desired to serve their wives, the families in the community are now much happier and healthier. It's amazing what a bit of extra sleep can do!

### **Increased literacy**

In the initial programme, we saw illiteracy levels drop from 67 percent to 32 percent as churches ran literacy programmes for those who did not know how to read or write.



## OVERALL CHANGES

In reality, not every community makes all these changes. Approximately 15 percent of churches dropped out during the initial programme. Many felt they were satisfied with the changes they had implemented. Of those churches, several rejoined the programme later when leaders from surrounding TCT churches encouraged them to persevere. Among the churches that remained in the programme, 9 out of 10 made at least 90 percent of these changes over the five-year period.

## EXPANDING RESULTS - AFRICA AND SOUTH ASIA

The TCT programme launched in two more areas from 2012 to 2015. In 2016, the programme began rapidly replicating in South Asia and Africa. Because these areas are newer, data from these programmes has not been incorporated here. However, testimonies indicate that common changes include planting fallow land, making bricks to build schools and churches, cleaning to improve hygiene, and cleaning or repairing water sources. We invite you to read and watch these stories at [tctprogram.org/stories](http://tctprogram.org/stories):

### IMPROVED ACCESS TO WATER:

- Bringing Clean Water
- Free Will Baptist Church
- Youth Clean the Well in Marare

### IMPROVED ACCESS TO MEDICAL CARE:

- Rediscovering Talents to Bless a Community
- Hospital Boat

### IMPROVED HYGIENE:

- Cleaning the Channel
- Cleaning a Hospital as an Act of Love
- The Church Sets an Example

### BUILDING PROJECTS:

- God Given Resources
- Discovering God Given Resources

### PLANTING AND HARVESTING:

- Local Resources

### REPAIRING/BUILDING ROADS:

- Fixing a Rough Village Road

## THE DRUNKEN GANG LEADER

One community we work in had a violent gang member known for abuse and drunkenness. The people living in the community were afraid of him, as he was known to have violent outbursts at anyone who upset him in any way—big or small. As the church prayed about who to help, they felt God put this man on their hearts. Initially, they were scared. What would happen? Would he be upset they helped and attack them? However, they wanted to obey God so they looked for a way to help. With harvest just around the corner, the church decided to serve the family by helping harvest their crop of tapioca. While the husband was out of town, the church leaders helped his wife harvest, dry, and carry the tapioca to a secure place near her home. Twenty-two people volunteered for three days, and, along with the wife, were able to finish harvesting and packing all the crops before her husband returned.

When the man returned home, he was very surprised to see all the tapioca harvested and he asked his wife who helped her and the children. Initially, his wife was nervous to tell him. She feared he would attack the church leaders. However, after some time, she confessed that it had been people from the church. He immediately marched off to the pastor's house. The pastor quickly gathered the deacons fearing the worst. The drunk gang member came in and started weeping, surprising everyone. "What's wrong," they asked. "I have never known love," the man replied. "I am a top gang leader, but now I want to be a Christian. I want to know the God who loves."

The church leaders assured him that he, too, could become a Christian, but he would have to give up alcohol and his lead position in the gang. He asked for time to think and consulted with his friends in the gang, who all tried to persuade him not to become a Christian. But in the end, the power of God's love won through and he gave his life to Christ. He then became a powerful evangelist amongst the gang leaders and members. In just a few short weeks, God used this man and his testimony to reach 27 new people for Christ. By the grace of God, and the faithful obedience of one church, a life that was once lost had been found, renewed and restored.

# KEY PRACTICES

## TEACH OBEDIENCE TO GOD

As we travel around the world visiting other projects, we are blessed by how often we see wealthy churches reaching out to poor areas. However, such churches often comment they have not seen significant change or transformation in the communities they are serving.

The common thread is that these wealthier churches have been developing and running the programmes for the community, even though they typically live outside the community. While they have served faithfully, a critical component is missing—they have not taught those they are working with to walk in obedience to God in all areas of life. Rather than teaching the poor to give, they are doing their giving for them. Rather than teaching the poor to love through service, they are doing their serving for them. When we challenge the churches we meet that they need to teach the poor to walk in obedience if they desire to see God transform their community, the first response is, “But they are too poor.”

In reality, no one is too poor to obey God in serving others. While not everyone can give monetarily, all can serve in some way. Serving does not have to be complicated; it can be as simple as visiting a lonely elderly person or removing litter on the street. We must be creative and discover unique ways to be obedient. Remember, it is through walking in obedience to God that people access His blessings.

## TEACH TRUTH

As we saw in the core principles, for those trapped in chronic or generational poverty, lack of material goods is not really the core issue. It is Satan's lies. The hope we offer is not material resources; it is God's truth.

As we seek to address the problems we see in communities, we need to remember that we have to start with teaching truth. When the communities get stuck, and they will, we need to try and understand the beliefs that are causing them to be stuck (for example, “we have nothing”), and teach the truth that counters that lie (“God has given us so much and we need to use it wisely”).

## **REMEMBER THE LIES**

In everything we do, we ask ourselves, “Will this confirm or break down any lies?” For example, it would have been possible for us to bring funding to do certain projects in the community. However, our fear was that we would affirm the lie, “You can’t do anything by yourself; you need outsiders to help.” By instead allowing churches to look to God and see Him supply, we are careful not to inadvertently affirm the very lies that we are trying to teach against.

God has often provided funding to local churches through the government or through another organisation. However, we do not provide any funding and have not taught communities to expect this. So when they receive resources from another source, they see it as provision in answer to prayer, and God receives the glory.

## **KEEP IT SMALL AND SIMPLE**

Our goal is to keep every part of our programme as simple as possible. There are 4 key reasons for this:

1. We seek to work in some of the most remote areas and choose Local Facilitators from the area. This means that many Local Facilitators have not attended more than a few years of school. If the programme is too technical, it is easy for them to feel overwhelmed. For example, we initially had Acts of Love reporting forms. However, we started to hear from churches that the Acts of Love were too hard. As we looked into it we discovered that

actually they enjoyed doing the actual activity but the reporting forms were overwhelming. As a result some churches were actually not doing projects, or doing them secretly, so they did not have to complete the reports. Now instead of having written reports, Local Facilitators take voice recorders and record testimonies of what has been happening during community visits. These recorded files are typed and used for reporting.

2. By keeping things simple, the TCT programme is easy to replicate. In many cases, churches that have graduated from the programme have gone on to plant churches in neighbouring communities and teach them the TCT lessons. Others have replicated the training within their tribal group. We are careful to keep the materials very basic, because if materials appear too flashy, those with more limited resources may think they cannot teach other churches because they do not have the technology or specialised materials to do so.
3. Because we are teaching people to use their own resources, we must manage their perceptions. If we turn up driving a new car or using expensive technology, then we will be seen as an affluent organisation; we make it much more difficult for people to believe that they need to give sacrificially. The willingness of those we teach to use what they have will be diminished.
4. Starting small also allows churches time to build skills and relationships. When the churches first start doing Acts of Love, it is rare for non-Christians to be involved. However, as they see the church serving, over time they become more willing to get involved. When the church first starts they typically lack project management skills. However, they develop and learn these skills as they do more projects. Starting with small projects gives them the opportunity to learn on the job.

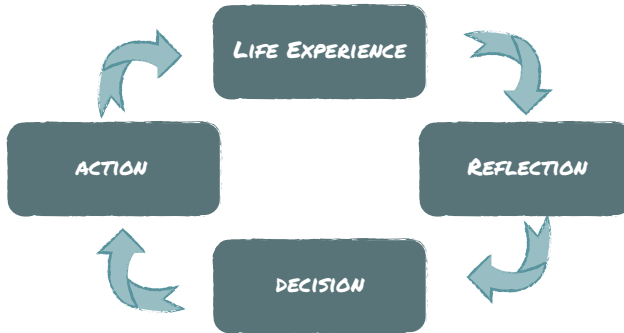
## **ALLOW GOD TO BE THE 'HERO'**

There is always the temptation, as a community development professional, to be recognised as the hero with all the answers. One of the early problems we faced when Local Facilitators came from outside an area was their occasional access to outside resources. When a church complained they did not have any resources to implement Acts of Love, our Local Facilitator would raise resources for them in the cities where they lived. While it was a blessing to see city churches giving generously, ultimately these communities all struggled to progress.

The reason, we believe, is twofold. First, when the next need arose, the church returned to the Local Facilitator or outside funder and asked for additional assistance. We had inadvertently reinforced the lie that they needed outsiders' resources because they were too poor to do anything on their own. Secondly, when the church avoided their responsibility to give from what they had, they also could not realise the blessing they would have received in giving. They missed out on seeing God multiply their efforts, so they were unable to move forward trusting in His provision and goodness.

Having learned from our experience, we now carefully teach our staff to encourage churches to look to God alone for help. Once the churches' eyes are opened to the solutions God has already provided, they are much less dependent on outside resources. Rather than looking to outsiders for support, they look to God and depend on Him.

# CHANGE IS PRODUCED BY WHAT WE DO



- Life Experience – the change process starts with what people already know, believe and value.
- Reflection – in the next stage people think about their experiences and compare them to an alternative.
- Decision – at this point a person must make a decision.
- Action – they then act on this decision. The results of their action are then added to their life experience.

So often we think of training as a way to change people. However, in reality training serves only to help people to hear a new idea. The actual change happens as they apply that idea and have a new or different experience. If that experience is positive, then they are more likely to repeat the behaviour, leading to change. As we run the programme, we need to remember that the role of learning is to give people something new to reflect on and motivate them to make a decision to do something differently. However, they only change when the experience of that new action is positive. Ensuring people apply what they are learning is essential to the change process.

## START WITH WHAT YOU HAVE

Inevitably, there are churches that, after doing one or two projects, present us with a proposal for funding to do large programmes. In many

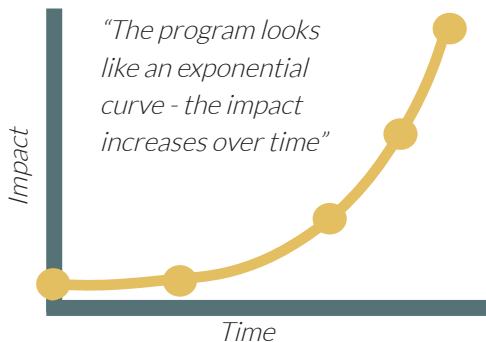
cases, the programmes presented are not inherently bad, but simply beyond their means. Initially, we turned down these proposals due to lack of funds. Now, it is a principle that we will not fund these proposals regardless of our financial capacity.

Remember, changed thinking, not more material resources, is what is needed to overcome poverty. If large programmes were the answer, many countries would have overcome poverty long ago.

By merely writing a proposal, the church indicates they do not fully understand and believe what we are teaching. They still believe that the hope for their community is found in outside resources. By funding these requests, we would unintentionally be affirming that belief.

Instead, we help churches see how they alone can help. While they may be unable to begin a large loan programme, they may have the funds to provide one family with a baby pig. The family could raise the pig and, in turn, offer a piglet from the first litter to another family. In our experience, churches that are diligent to give what they can and use what they have quickly see God multiply their resources so they have enough to reach their dreams.

Without extra resources, results in the first year are not very impressive. The average church will complete 2–4 Acts of Love. However, as their thinking and understanding changes, the results tend to accelerate over time. We describe the programme as looking like an exponential curve where the impact of the programme increases over time. The reality is that change takes time. Our desire is to progress slowly so that people have time to learn, reflect, and truly change.





## **RECOGNISE IT WILL LOOK MESSY**

The reality is that our work is not tidy and well ordered. With hundreds of communities all trying to listen to God and obey Him, things get messy quickly. Often the things that the churches and communities choose to do surprise me; they are not at all what I would have chosen for them. In my overly organised way of thinking, their willingness to walk into situations with childlike faith is sometimes slightly startling. However, without fail, God meets them there. Not once in working with hundreds of churches have I heard the testimony, “We tried to obey God, but it failed.” Even on the days when everything seems to go wrong, they are still aware that God is there with them.

Additionally, the churches’ projects don’t have the beauty of those from well-funded programmes. The communities start with very limited resources. For example, the latrines they build are often quite basic—many have rice sacks as walls. While we do try to make sure the projects all meet world health standards, we must be clear on what is essential and what is extra. Waiting until they can do things perfectly only holds the churches back from being able to start. It takes away from the emphasis on wholistic discipleship, which is the heart of the programme, and moves it to professional community development.

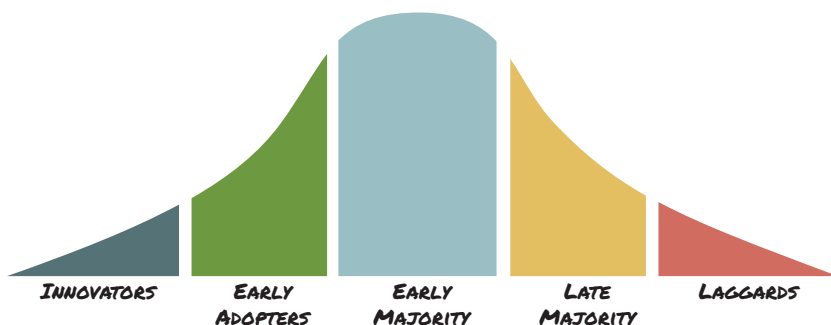
## **BE AWARE OF THE ADOPTION CURVE**

Everyone accepts new ideas at a different pace. Some people love new ideas or things. They are quick to try it out. Others like to wait and see what happens when the early adopters try. This is true in this programme as well. It has a number of key implications:

- 1. Not everyone will want to immediately be involved.** Don’t be discouraged when some churches are uninterested or when not everyone in the church goes out to do Acts of Love.
- 2. Train as many people as possible at a church.** If we only train one or two people, and they do not fall in the early adopter cat-

egory, then the programme will not stick. If you train 30 people, and only 20 percent get excited enough to do an Act of Love, then you still have six people who can work together to do something. Typically, when the rest of the church hears the results of these Acts of Love, they are motivated to join in. By the fourth or fifth project, generally 50–70 percent of the church members are willing to participate.

- 3. Share the stories.** There are always some churches that go slowly, doing the minimum they feel they must do and nothing more. However, in our experience the thing that gets the late adopters involved is hearing the stories of what is happening to others. Often churches see the impact in some of the early adopter churches and come to us begging to be included. We provide a magazine every six months to help you share those stories.



# PROGRAMME DETAILS

## PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

The programme is made up of ten trainings that are completed over five years—one training every six months. We recommend that the trainings be delivered to as many people in each participating church as possible, up to 40 people (it is difficult for everyone to participate if there are more). How you get started, how long each training is, who does the trainings, and where they are held depend on your budget, capacity, and the churches you are working with.

## TRAINING METHODS

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Originally each module was written as a 3–4-day training. We worked in rural areas, where people had free time between ploughing and harvest seasons and didn't find it hard to have 3 days available once every 6 months. Our trainers had to travel to get to the communities. While it was not usually far, the conditions of the roads (or lack of roads) meant that it was common for the local facilitator to have to travel half a day to get to a community. So the most efficient method of training was to run it for 3 full days.

However, as we expanded to other areas, the training schedule was adapted to fit what worked for different circumstances. Some of the common adaptations include doing trainings:

- Sunday afternoons after church for 5–6 weeks per module.
- One evening a week for 10 weeks per module.
- In place of the Sunday sermon (this works best in church plants in which the sermon is already highly participatory; otherwise, it can be hard to get the church to understand the sudden change of style).

All of these and more work fine. While we still lean towards a 3-day training, the most important thing is to see as many people in the church involved as possible. For many churches that means an adapted schedule.

Two modules should be completed every year, spaced 6 months apart. Whenever groups have tried to speed this up, we have found the results decrease significantly. It is important to provide the churches with plenty of time to apply what they are learning.

## **KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **LOCAL FACILITATORS**

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The training is delivered to churches by Local Facilitators. Typically, the Local Facilitators are pastors. The best Local Facilitators live close to the churches they are training and are of similar cultural and socio-economic background. That way, rather than being seen as outsiders with seemingly elaborate and irrelevant ideas, students recognise the facilitators as people who understand their lives. As the Local Facilitators work to apply the lessons in their own lives, they are able to share testimonies of how God helped them. They become models for the churches to follow. The testimonies of the Local Facilitators are significantly more powerful than any that could have been written from afar.

This does mean that many of our Local Facilitators have had very little education. They are required to read, but the materials have been written to be as simple as possible for those teaching. (You can see more on our selection criteria and methods below).

The number of churches that each Local Facilitator works with varies greatly. Some only train their own church. Some train their own church(es) and maybe one or two others. In a few places where the denomination is very supportive and makes time for it, Local Facilitators train five to eight churches each. Each of these models has worked well.

The most important indicators of success have been (1) the pastor's reputation, (2) his or her application of the ideas, and (3) the distance between the Local Facilitator and the church(es).

## **MASTER TRAINERS**

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In programmes with more than just a few Local Facilitators we have Master Trainers. Master Trainers are responsible for training and supporting Local Facilitators. Typically the Local Facilitators in an area will gather for training every three months. Two trainings teach the modules to be passed on to churches and two teach skills to help facilitators be successful.

Master Trainers are appointed by the denomination or organisation doing the programme in an area. Ideally they live close to the area where the programme is being applied and have the time to adequately follow-up and support the Local Facilitators.

If you are applying this programme yourself to a few churches, we suggest you act as a Master Trainer, not as a Local Facilitator. We recommend choosing someone at the churches you are working with who is able to teach and fits the selection criteria mentioned below. Teach them the materials so they can re-teach it to the church.

## **PROGRAMME DIRECTORS**

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The Programme Director is the person who is coordinating the programme for a particular organisation or denomination—our partner and contact person. The Programme Director is responsible for organising the training, ensuring it gets to all the Master Trainers, overseeing materials and translation if needed, collecting stories and reports, and helping coordinate the magazine for their area.

For those doing the programme themselves with a few churches, this role can be completed by the Master Trainer.

## PROGRAMME TIMELINE

We start with an orientation. The orientation is a three-day training for key decision-makers in an organisation(s) or denomination(s) that helps them understand both the programme and the core principles that undergird it. Those that attend are rarely the rural poor themselves. Orientation is for those who can make a decision about whether this is a programme they would like to do and who are able to appoint Master Trainers to move the programme forward.

In an effort to wisely steward our resources, we don't start in a country until there is sufficient interest. If the partner organisation or denomination is able to mobilise 100 or more churches, we can do an orientation just for them. However, for smaller groups, we encourage you to find others that might be interested and work together to host an orientation.

If you wish to start the programme, and you have fewer than 100 churches, we offer an online orientation in the Members Section of [tctprogram.org](http://tctprogram.org). It is important to watch the videos to ensure you have a good foundational understanding before getting started.

The next step is the first training, Module 1, for a group of pastors from the selected area(s). (As you are choosing areas to work in, remember that this programme is designed for rural communities experiencing chronic poverty). Invite any pastors who are interested to attend, but never offer sitting fees.

Some groups promote the programme through their monthly pastors' meetings, sharing a few parts of lessons as a way to find those who are interested. Since pastor buy-in has been a critical factor for success, we try to ensure that the pastors whose churches will be participating in the programme do attend some sort of Module 1 training.

While the format varies, the programme begins by giving pastors and leaders exposure to the ideas and looking for those who are interested to become Local Facilitators.

### **Local Facilitator Selection**

The Master Trainer returns to an area three to six months after the initial exposure training to see who is actually applying what they learned. Local Facilitators are chosen from those pastors who have been acting on what they learned in Module 1.

Again, the most successful Local Facilitators tend to be from the same ethnic group and live within 20 kilometres of those they are training.

The following qualities are essential to consider as you select Local Facilitators:

- **A sense of calling** – Although this is hard to measure, most of our Local Facilitators would testify they had been praying that God would bring help to their community. They see this programme as an answer to prayer.
- **A demonstration of fruitfulness** – We look for people who have already led their own church in completing an Act of Love. We want to ensure our Local Facilitators will become models to their own communities and churches as well as to the churches they train.
- **Approval of the area denominational leader** – For maximum success, we try to ensure area denomination leaders support and even encourage this work. Including them in key decisions helps with this. So we ask the denominational leaders of the province or district to help in the selection of staff. We often have Local Facilitators from different denominations that are on the same team, but normally they each work and train churches in their own denomination.
- **Respect and influence** – The Local Facilitators will teach what, at first, will be seen as radical ideas. If they are not well-respected,

people simply will not listen. Likewise, without influence it is hard for Local Facilitators to get opportunities to train surrounding churches, especially churches whose pastor did not attend the first training.

- ▶ **Ability to read** – Our training materials are written. While writing skills are not essential, the Local Facilitators must be able to read the materials in order to do the training. Although we work among many minority language groups, because of time and cost of translating, we usually translate materials into only the majority language. Local Facilitators are usually able to read the majority language and then teach in their own language.

## **Next steps**

Once Local Facilitators are identified, their first activity is to attend the training: Facilitator Development 1 (FD1). At this training Master Trainers will review Module 1, with each Facilitator teaching a lesson. This gives everyone the opportunity to review the material and improve their adult education skills by practicing and critiquing one another. FD1 also teaches the vision of the program, the facilitators' role, the basics of adult education, and the reporting process.

The Local Facilitators spend the next six months training churches in their area in Module 1. We recommend that the Local Facilitator starts by training churches where the pastor has already attended the first Module 1 training, as these pastors are typically more open to the programme and happy to have their church trained. Once these churches have completed Module 1, the Local Facilitator promotes the programme to other churches who did not attend the first pastors' training.

After three months of training churches, the Local Facilitators come together with the Master Trainer for Facilitator Development 2 (FD2). This is a two- to three-day training that serves to improve their basic skills and helps them to think together about how to overcome obstacles. It is also an opportunity to share testimonies and ideas from their churches to inspire one another. The Local Facilitators then continue



to teach Module 1 to churches for three more months (for a total of six months training Module 1).

The Local Facilitators then receive Module 2 training, which they proceed to teach to the same churches who received Module 1. Three months later, Local Facilitators will receive Facilitator Development 3 training. This process continues, with meetings every 3 months. Once every six months the Master Trainer provides the new module to be passed on to the churches. In between we do Facilitator Development training.

## **MAGAZINE**

There is a magazine designed for the churches that are involved in the program. It serves three purposes:

1. To remind people of the key principles of the program
2. To share and communicate new ideas
3. To inspire the churches with testimonies from other areas

The magazine is produced twice a year and made available for you to translate and distribute. It is best to distribute magazines to all the churches who are participating in the program.

In many areas where the programme is implemented, most of the people are illiterate. Many times, the pastor will read an article from the magazine each week after Sunday service. Ideas on how to apply it to their lives are then discussed and shared.

The magazine is kept simple and printed in black and white so it can be easily photocopied and distributed by anyone.

A typical issue contains 8 pages and includes topics such as:

- Testimonies
- Health
- Marriage and Family
- Agriculture
- Money Management
- Spiritual Growth
- Wholistic Ministry Ideas or Encouragement
- Review of Previous Lessons

There is a sample issue in the Members Section and articles that you can use for your own magazine.

# THE TRAINING

## OVERVIEW

The programme is made up of 10 church trainings (modules) and 10 Facilitator Development trainings. We typically meet together with the Local Facilitators every 3 months and alternate between the 2 types of training.

## CHURCH TRAINING

The modules are the trainings that are done at churches to reach as many church members as possible, not just the pastor. There are 10 modules. These modules are taught over a period of 5 years. They are designed to wholistically disciple church members so they are able to bring transformation to their community. Groups of 10-40 church members are ideal in order to allow for good participation and discussion, which leads to better personal application.

<b>YEAR 1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION TO WHOLISTIC MINISTRY</b>	<b>KINGDOM OF GOD</b>
<b>YEAR 2</b>	<b>GOD'S TRUTH + SATAN'S LIES</b>	<b>HEALTH</b>
<b>YEAR 3</b>	<b>MARRIAGE + FAMILY</b>	<b>MONEY MANAGEMENT</b>
<b>YEAR 4</b>	<b>SALT + LIGHT</b>	<b>AGRICULTURE</b>
<b>YEAR 5</b>	<b>EVANGELISM</b>	<b>LIVING AS GOD INTENDED</b>

The first 3 modules (indicated in blue) focus on key biblical truths. At the conclusion of each of these modules, churches are challenged to reach out and demonstrate God's love to their community.

Five of the next 6 modules (indicated in light grey) are skills based. We begin each training by introducing the biblical principles related to a respective skill, followed by practical guidelines on how to apply it in life. Those who have studied are then encouraged to share their newly found knowledge whenever possible—for example when washing clothes by the well or resting in the fields during a long day's work. By recounting what they have learned, these skills are transferred to more people within the community.

The 2 trainings highlighted in yellow serve as a review and reminder of our ultimate goal and purpose—to bring honour to God's name and glorify Him. For more details on each of these trainings, please see Church Training Summary.

# CHURCH TRAINING SUMMARY

**Module 1: Introduction to Wholistic Ministry** – Introduces the basic principles of wholistic ministry and challenges churches to demonstrate God's love through simple Acts of Love in their community. Churches usually begin helping through projects such as working in the fields, cleaning litter, building a well or house for a widow, or repairing a road.

**Module 2: Kingdom of God** – A reminder that God cares about how we live every aspect of our lives. Specific lessons cover the principle of work, how we can have a kingdom impact, and the role of the Church in building God's kingdom.

**Module 3: Satan's Lies** – A look at how Satan's lies hold us in poverty. It is through God's truth that we are able to overcome poverty. Also included in this training are lessons on stewardship of creation and bringing change to communities.

**Module 4: Health** – This lesson starts by addressing the issue of why Christians should care about health. This is followed by basic lessons on hygiene and treating common illnesses.

**Module 5: Marriage & Family** – Outlines biblical husband/wife roles in marriage, how to build a strong marriage, and basic parenting techniques with an emphasis on appropriate discipline.

**Module 6: Money Management** – Covers basic principles for managing money, such as how to calculate profit, how to budget, and how to calculate interest on debt.

**Module 7: Salt & Light** – Reminds students that our lives are not only about ourselves, but also about having a kingdom impact in our communities, provinces, and even the nation. Lessons focus on glorifying God in all we do, as well as specific advice on overcoming sin.

**Module 8: Agriculture** – Covers organic farming, small home gardens, and the importance of crop diversity. This training helps farmers make wise decisions and reminds them of God's call to be stewards of all creation.

**Module 9: Evangelism** – Equips churches as they reach out into non-Christian communities. A core aspect of this teaching is Chronological Storying. This is a method of using stories to share the message of Christ that is particularly suitable in oral-based cultures.

**Module 10: Living as God Intends** – A review of the previous 9 trainings. This training focuses on helping the church celebrate how far they have come, while also challenging them in areas still needing growth.

# FACILITATOR DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

Facilitator Development Training is designed to help improve skills and ensure adequate support of our Local Facilitators. Because the Local Facilitators live in the areas that they are training, they often are scattered over a relatively large region. Facilitator Development Trainings are an opportunity to get everyone together, encourage and support one another, and address any challenges. The Facilitator Development Trainings include 3 things:

- ▶ **Prayer and Devotions:** Depending on God is a central principle of all our work. We always need to remind ourselves that God is the primary agent of change. As part of that focus, we do morning devotions and take time to pray for each person and each of the areas that we are working in.
- ▶ **Sharing Testimonies:** We spend significant time listening to facilitators share stories about what is happening in their areas. Often one person's testimonies will inspire other facilitators to try the same thing in their own area. It also provides us an opportunity to see where things are getting 'stuck' and to help the group to learn to brainstorm together to solve problems.
- ▶ **Teaching:** These trainings are designed to build up the skills of the facilitators. There are a host of challenges that arise as facilitators begin working with multiple churches. The modules are designed to equip them with better skills for effective teaching, leadership, problem solving, and addressing conflict.

The curriculum is based on the needs of the group and the issues that they are actually facing. We also encourage the use of other training resources if they better meet the needs of the group. For example, in an area where the pastors only had 2 sermons that they rotated between each Sunday, we worked with another organisation to bring training on how to understand the Bible and prepare a sermon.

The Facilitator Development units that we have available include:

- Programme Introduction – goals and outline of the programme, Adult Education 1
- Core Skills – Adult Education 2, collecting testimonies, dealing with problems, visiting
- How People Change
- Leadership Training
- Healthy Relationships 1
- Healthy Relationships 2
- Evaluation
- Encouraging Generosity
- Healthy Leadership

## **USING THE MATERIALS**

### **PARTICIPATORY TRAINING**

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The trainings have been written in a participatory style of learning. They include group work, role plays, games, questions, and personal reflection. The goal in all of this is to help the students understand the material and apply it in their lives. We invest time in training Local Facilitators to teach in a participatory way because we believe it leads to greater application and action later by the participants. The first 2 Facilitator Development Modules include lessons on participatory education methods and time for facilitators to practice these skills with each other.

### **MATERIALS AVAILABLE**

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The training materials are simple. They are designed so that you do not need to use any special technology. Our desire is to make them easy to reproduce and share. That way, if a church wants to share it with a neighbouring church, they can simply photocopy the materials or even draw their own visual aids.

## Facilitator Materials

- ▶ **Teacher's Books** – Each module has a teacher's book that provides detailed instructions for leading the training.
- ▶ **Visual Aids** – Most modules have visual aids that are simple and easily reproducible, such as a poster, pictures, and cards. The facilitator can determine which resources would be best to use in his/her context.

## Student Materials

- ▶ **Student Guide** – Each training has a student guide. This provides a place for students to make notes during the training or worksheets to use for group work. In areas with low literacy, or where printing costs are high, it is not necessary to use student materials.

## Obtaining Copies of the Training Information and Materials

Copies of training materials are available in PDF format on our website at [tctprogram.org/tools/](https://tctprogram.org/tools/). If you wish to have copies in Microsoft Word to contextualize or translate, they can be downloaded from the Members Section (<https://tctprogram.org/members/church-training-modules/> – you will need to be a member first to access this). Please be aware that the Microsoft Word version is a large file size and the layout often changes depending on your version of Word.

## Additional Languages

The materials are available in a number of languages. If you are seeking a particular language, please contact us.

## Translation and Contextualisation

If you are thinking of translating the materials, please do let us know so that we are able to make sure you are not duplicating someone else's efforts, and so that we can share your efforts with others from that language group. As you translate, you may contextualise the materials to make them work better in your area by adapting stories, changing names, etc. Again, please let us know before starting, and we will send you the translation and contextualisation guidelines.











Truth Centered Transformation is a ministry of Reconciled World.

Learn more at [reconciledworld.org](https://reconciledworld.org)

If you have questions please email [info@reconciledworld.org](mailto:info@reconciledworld.org)