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## WHAT RESOURCES DO I HAVE?

Jesus told a story about three servants. Their master was going on a trip, so entrusted five talents (money) to one servant, two to another, and one to the third servant. The first servant used his five talents to earn five more. The second servant used his three talents to earn three more. But the third servant hid his one talent and did nothing with it. When the master returned from his trip, he praised the first two servants for using the talents to make a good profit, but he was angry with the servant who did not use his talent. (This story is found in Matthew 25:14-20.)



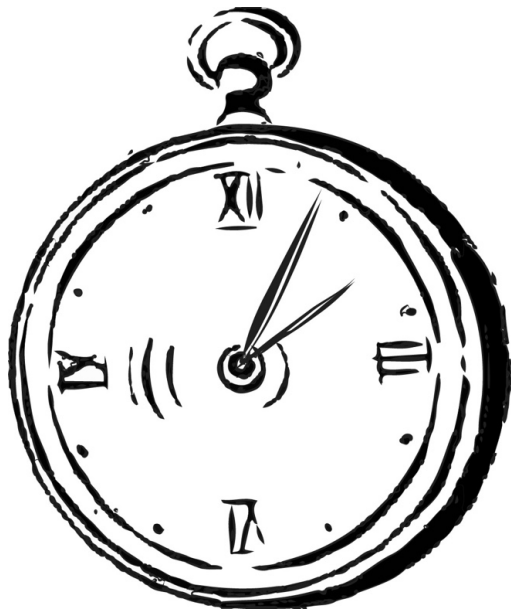
One day a believer was reading the story of the talents. He stopped reading and said to his wife, “I wish I could be like the servant with five talents so I could do great things for God. I feel sorry for the servant that only had one talent. I think the master was too hard on him. Well, I don’t have any talents or special gifts to serve God. I’m so poor, I have nothing to give. I cannot help anyone because I have so many needs myself. Oh Lord, please help me and give me a few talents to use.”

Have you ever thought or said something like this? It is a common way for us to think, but is it true?

Just like the master in the story of the talents, God gives resources to everyone, even if we do not realize it. We need to discover all the gifts, talents, and resources that God has given us.

Resources come in many forms. Money is only one kind of resource. There are many other resources around us:

- **Physical Resources** - Look around. Do you have trees, dirt, houses, or gardening tools? These are all physical resources. Ask God to open your eyes to all the things that He has given you, and ask Him how to use them well. In some communities, people realized that God had made their soil rich with clay and good for making bricks. One man realized that he could use his land to grow papaya trees.
- **Spiritual Resources** - In John 14:26, Jesus promised that His Father would give every believer the Holy Spirit. James 5:15-16 also reminds us that we can pray, which is powerful and effective!



- **Time** - God has given us all 24 hours in a day - we need to make sure we are using our time wisely.
- **Skills and knowledge** - What are some of the skills that you will find in your community or church? Perhaps the ability to build a house or grow vegetables. Are you using these skills well?
- **Creativity** - God made us in His image and He has given us the ability to think, dream, plan, create, and solve problems.

What other resources are available in your community and in your family? What resources do you have?

Everything we have is given by God and can be used to serve others. Sometimes we think our skills, talents, or gifts are not valuable. Sometimes we are afraid to use them. Often we don't remember that they are from God and He wants us to use them.

In the story of the talents, the master told the servant who was given two talents and used them, "Well done, you good and faithful servant! You have been faithful in managing small amounts, so I will put you in charge of large amounts" (Matthew 25:23). We all want to be like that servant; we want God to praise us for using the resources He has given us well.

Pray and ask God what resources He has put in your community that could be used for His glory. Ask Him for wisdom and creativity to use them well.

## ***Spiritual Growth***

### **Who Do You Depend On?**

When you face a problem and are not sure what to do, who do you go to for help and advice? We typically ask friends, a pastor, or a family member, and that is good. But we also need to ask God what we should do. In the Bible, there are many verses that tell us to look to God for answers. Here are a few to consider:

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight." Proverbs 3:5-6

"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." James 1:5

God loves us and wants what is best for us. The Bible tells us God's will for how we should live every part of our lives. We need to learn all we can by reading and listening to the Bible. Then, when we have a problem, we will remember what we have learned and know what to do.



We should also pray for wisdom and guidance. Look again at James 1:5. It says, "If any of you needs wisdom, you should ask God for it..." We often ask God to solve our problems or give us things we need, but do we ask for wisdom so we will know what to do? Consider the story of Joshua and the wall of Jericho from the Bible, the book of Joshua, chapter 6.

Joshua was the commander of the army of the nation of Israel. The whole nation had been wandering in the desert with no land of their own for more than forty years. God had promised them a good land to be their home, and now they were ready to enter the land. But there was a problem. The city of Jericho, a fortress with strong, high walls of stone, guarded the border of the promised land. There seemed to be no way to defeat that city. As Joshua pondered this problem, God appeared to him and told him exactly what the Israelite army must do to win the battle: march around the city once a day for six days, then march around it seven times on the seventh day, then raise a battle cry.

Joshua led the army to obey the Lord's instructions, and on the seventh day God caused the walls around the city to fall down!

You see, the Lord wanted to help His people, but there was also something they needed to do—they had to follow His instructions.

If I were Joshua, I would have thought that marching around in circles seemed like a very strange plan for winning a battle. But God wants us to obey Him even when it doesn't seem to make sense. The Bible says that God's ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8). Often, what He tells us to do may not make sense to us. When we face problems and obeying is hard, that is the most important time to trust God and obey Him anyway.

One TCT partner church had a big problem: there was a violent gang leader in their village who was known to attack anyone who upset him in any way. Everyone was afraid of him. As the church prayed, they felt God put this man on their hearts. They were scared that if they tried to help him, he would be angry. However, they wanted to obey God, so they looked for a way to help him. While the man was out of town, the church members helped his wife harvest their crops. When the man returned home and found all the work done, he marched to the pastor's house. The pastor quickly gathered the deacons, fearing the worst. But the gang leader surprised everyone by starting to cry. He said, "I have never known love, but now I want to know the God who loves." The man became a Christian and, in just a few short weeks, God used him and his testimony to reach 27 more people for Christ.

Even though helping the gang leader was hard for the church members, they obeyed anyway. Because of their obedience, the whole village was freed from fear and many people were saved. I'm sure the church is glad they did what God showed them to do.

As you read the stories in this magazine, can you find examples of when the churches obeyed Scripture, prayed, and obeyed when it was difficult? What did God do in response? What problem are you facing that you want God's help to solve?

## Sodis – Solar Water Disinfection

Water is very important for good health. We need to drink it. We need to wash with it. Our animals need it, too. But water can also be the source of sickness and even death. Dirty water is not good for us. Even water that looks clean can have bacteria and parasites that cause diarrhea and other sickness. When we and our children are sick from bad water, we have to spend money on treatment. We will lose income because some days we are not able to work. Young children can die from diarrhea caused by bad water.

God wants us to be well and wants our children to live! Good health is important to God. In the Bible God gives many instructions for how to keep ourselves clean and prevent disease. These rules show us that God wants us to look after ourselves and try to prevent disease.

One simple and important way to care for our bodies is to use clean water. If you are not sure if your water is clean or not, ask one simple question: Is it common for children in my area to become sick with diarrhea? If the answer is “yes”, there is a good chance the water in your area is not clean.

God has given us an excellent method to clean water – using the sun. God made the rays of the sun powerful to kill bacteria, parasites, and germs that live in water. Using the Sodis method, we can have clean water. This method is used in more than 20 countries and is promoted by the World Health Organization (WHO). Some important things to remember if you are using Sodis:

1. Sodis is only useful for treating small amounts of water. You should use 1-2 liter bottles.
2. Make sure you have clear bottles that aren't too scratched up. Old soft drink bottles are fine, but not the sprite or 7up bottles because they are green.
3. Make sure you remove the label from the bottle.
4. Sodis is only appropriate for clear water. To check that the water is clear: fill a bottle with water and place it on the Sodis logo below. If you can see the logo, then you can use this method. If not, leave the water to stand for a while and then filter the water through a piece of cloth. This will make it clear enough for Sodis. (See an example on the next page)



5. Place the bottles of clear water on their sides in the sun for 6 hours. If the sky is more than ½
6. covered in clouds, leave the bottles out for two days. Laying the bottles against a sheet of corrugated metal also makes Sodis more effective.
7. Make sure the cups you use are clean before pouring your Sodis water into them. Or drink directly from the bottle.
8. Water should be used in 1-2 days. Bacteria will grow back so make sure that you don't keep the water for many days. If the water starts to taste funny the bottle may be starting to get too old. It is time to replace your bottle.



## ***Acts of Love Stories***

### **Cleaning A Well (Uganda, East Africa)**

Marare village is a densely populated and diverse area of Uganda. People of different tribes, income-levels, religions, and ages live in Marare. But what brings them all together is water. Decades ago, the community was assisted to have a protected well. During the rainy seasons, the runoff water from the many houses runs down the slope towards the protected well. Over time, the well became polluted with silt, rubbish, and debris. Because of this unhygienic situation, the community often got waterborne diseases.

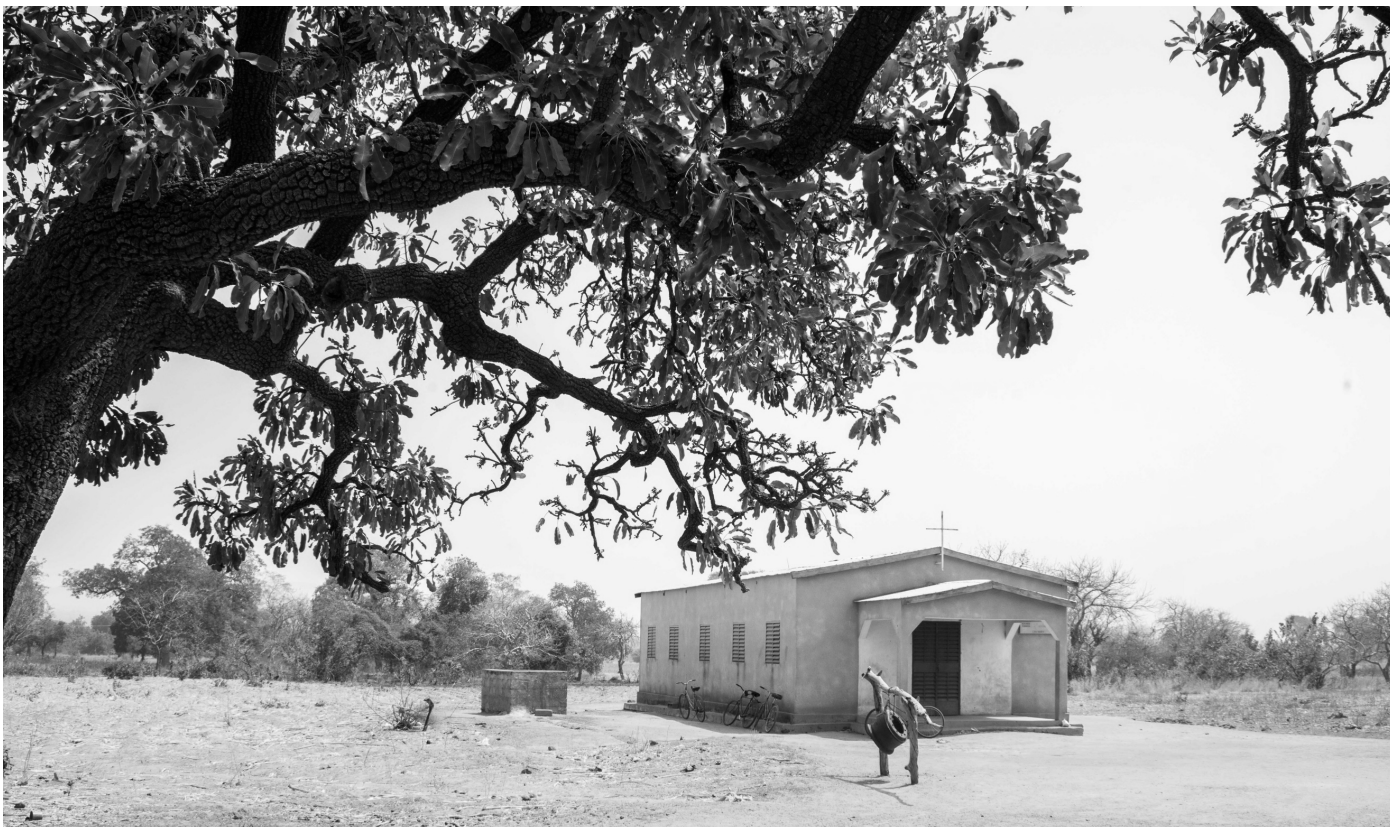
Two youth leaders from the local church, after studying TCT through a program of Food for the Hungry, decided to show God's love to their community by cleaning the well one Saturday. When women came to draw water, they saw the two youth working and joined in to help. When the Water Source User Committee saw the community members taking responsibility for the well, it encouraged them to be active again in helping to maintain it. Before, most people believed that the leaders needed to address the problems with the well.

But after this one Act of Love, the community members are empowered. One mother was overheard teaching her child, "We can be responsible for our own health." Praise God for transformed thinking and improved health in Marare!

### **Rejected by Others But Welcomed By the Church (DRC, Central Africa)**

God has prompted many churches in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to show His love to vulnerable women and girls. Here are a few of their stories:

After one church in DRC started to study the TCT program a teenager came to the church pregnant and looking for help. Her family had thrown her out because they were ashamed that she had become pregnant out of wedlock. Having learned about loving their neighbors, the church chose not to follow the community in rejecting her. They gave her food and clothing and arranged for her to stay in the church. The



women in the church helped to care for her. Everyone in the church accepted her.

Another church in DRC reached out to a prostitute who had lost her husband and son. She was seen as unlucky, and no one in town wanted to go near her. The church cleared a room and allowed her to live there. Moved by the love of the church, she came to Christ. A short time later, she was involved in a car accident. Most people in the community believed the accident proved that she was truly unlucky. But the church continued to look after her. A year later, she had become a leader at the church and her extended family had all come to Christ.

## **Grace Uses Her Skills to Help Her Neighbors (Uganda, East Africa)**

Through a program of Food for the Hungry-Uganda, Grace Nandaba and her church have studied three modules of TCT so far. Grace heard about Acts of Love, but she didn't think she could help her neighbors because she was poor herself. The TCT trainer taught, "God has given us so much, and He wants us to use the resources He has given us to serve others." After

learning this truth, Grace realized that she did have a way to serve others, because she was skilled at making fuel-efficient stoves.

The women in her community worked hard collecting firewood to cook with, and the forest had become a protected area, so they also risked being caught by police and sent to jail for gathering wood there. This was a desperate situation for the women.

Grace decided to show love to her neighbors by teaching them what she knew. She gathered the women that were part of a community savings group and began sharing about the fuel efficient stove. She explained, "[Open] fire just goes without cooking, but this kind of stove confines and directs the fire to the pan." She explained that it makes less smoke and is safer around children.

With Grace's help, the women made themselves fuel efficient stoves. They've cut their need for firewood in half, and this has made their lives much easier. They testify, "With a little fire, you can do much!"



## **Cleaning A Clinic (Burkina Faso, West Africa)**

After participating in TCT Module 1, the Evangelical Assembly of Pentecost in the village of Ouahigouya, Burkina Faso, wanted to show God's love to their community. They decided to clean the health clinic in their area as an Act of Love. Around sixty church members participated in the project for one day. The community members noticed the large group and came out asking, "What is going on? What is going on?" The pastor explained that they were there to clean the clinic. Because of the church's willingness to serve, one community leader, an animist, said, "I would like to thank the church for this activity they are doing now. I'm just praying that the church will continue its action...and we can join hands with them." Ever since the church cleaned the clinic, the community has more respect for Christians. When the church calls a meeting, many community members come. The pastor explains the reason for this change, "Christ was concerned with people's needs, and He tried to meet some of these needs. We are following Christ's path. Today, people are fed up with listening to 'Jesus loves you, Jesus loves you.' Our actions, when they see us doing things, this really speaks to them."

## **The Water Shed (India, South Asia)**

The church in Nelaturu, India started to study the TCT Program in 2016, and right away it began to change their perspective.

The church was inspired to do something for their community. They identified that in summer, due to the rise in temperatures, many were falling sick and even dying because of the heat. They knew they had to do something to help their community. The people of the church got together and installed a small shed to supply free water to the passers-by. Although all the people in the church are mostly laborers and do small jobs, they still gave out of what they had and glorified God. They did not just supply any kind of water, but they made sure that the people were supplied with filtered, clean, cool water. The water shed was a blessing to many people who went to work in the heat of the sun. Many of them were relieved after having the refreshing drink and were surprised to see the church lending a helping hand to the community.

Before TCT was introduced to the church, the church kept to themselves. There was strong opposition from the community towards the church. The community believed that the church only existed to serve its members and not the whole community. This resulted in the community not wanting the church in the village, because of their spiritual activities. Ever since the church did this Act of Love, the community's



perspective has completely changed. The community now has stopped their opposition of the church, but instead has accepted them as their own.

## The Bridge (Southeast Asia)

There was a community of a minority people who began studying TCT. As they learned that all people are created in God's image, they came to understand that God loves even their people too, and that He had given them the Holy Spirit to be able to do ministry in their own community. Next, they learned about the kingdom of God—that the kingdom is anywhere that Jesus is king, where His will is done. They realized that their village could be part of that kingdom! They began to look at their community differently, seeking ways to show God's love and to bring everything under Jesus' rule.

There is a river that runs behind their village, with an old bridge made of wood and bamboo. Cars cannot cross it, but people with motorbikes often do. One day, while two motorbikes were crossing there, the bridge broke and the bikes fell into the river. Normally, the community would wait, hoping that the government would fix the bridge. But the church saw an opportunity to show God's love, so right away twenty people from the church came, bringing their own wood and bamboo to repair the bridge. Travelers on both

sides of the river who were waiting to cross were very thankful for the church's help. After the repairs were done, they saw that the church had done a good job, so they were confident to cross the bridge. Through this Act of Love, people from different communities on both sides of the river noticed the church and that Christians' attitudes are very unique.

