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## How Do We Respond When Life Seems Unfair?

Paul had worked very hard on his wheat fields. They were growing well, and he was very pleased. The crop was almost ready for harvesting, and Paul was looking forward to a rich harvest. Then, days before harvest, there was a severe hail storm—his entire crop was ruined! Paul was depressed. All his hard work over the past few months had come to nothing. Worries about how he was going to pay back his loan were already haunting him.

Five-year-old Annie was playing hide and seek with her sister, when the neighbour's son entered the stable where she was hiding and attacked her. Pain and fear robbed this little girl of her childhood. Her mother and father were so sad and angry.

Jane's family was very poor. Even though she went to school, her parents could not afford to buy the books and supplies she needed. She was often humiliated by the teacher in front of the whole class, even though she worked hard. The teacher often told her she would amount to nothing.

Life does not always seem fair. At some time or another, we all face very difficult circumstances. The Bible is also full of stories of people who seem to be put through unfair situations.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were taken from their homeland and lived as captives. When the king of that land told them to worship his idol, they refused. So the king had them thrown into a fiery furnace for obeying God!



Joseph was the youngest of 11 brothers and was his father's favorite son. Because his older brothers were jealous, they sold him to slave traders. Then, while he was laboring as a slave, he was wrongly accused of a crime and spent years in prison.

Even Jesus was unjustly accused, beaten, and finally crucified by His own people.

When we have difficulty, we often dream of how things could be different. “If only I had more money,” we think. “If only the crops did not fail.” “If only I had an understanding teacher... or better parents...” We pray, “Lord, take this away!” We wish for our situations to change, but God wants to use our situations to change us! The change most needed is not in our circumstances but in us. God does not want us to fear the situation, but to trust Him in the midst of our struggles.

How then should we respond when life seems unfair? In Deuteronomy 8:2-3, God explains why He allowed His people to hunger and thirst as they wandered through the desert: *“to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would*

*keep God’s commands. He humbled you, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”*

We must not allow difficult situations to shape our beliefs about life. Instead we trust the truth of God’s word. In the midst of our difficult or trying situations God wants us to seek Him, obey Him, and depend on Him. Philippians 4:6 tells us, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” This verse tells us that we should be thankful instead of anxious. In our most difficult situations God wants us to humble ourselves and seek Him for the way forward. Thanking God shifts our focus from fear of our circumstance to faith in God’s goodness.

## Spiritual Growth

### How to Start a Children’s Ministry

Starting a children’s ministry can be a big challenge. So we don’t want to start one until we understand the importance. The children’s ministry time is not just to keep the children occupied so that the adults can attend church. The purpose of the children’s ministry should be **to help our children to develop a personal relationship with our Lord Jesus**. To do this, we must teach them to know Him, love Him, and obey His commands. Here are a few simple suggestions to help you get started in children’s ministry.

**Teachers** – Choose teachers who know the Bible well, are mature in faith, and enjoy children.

**Format** – Many churches have the children attend the first part of the church service along with their parents. After the worship time, the children can be sent to the children’s class while the adults have a sermon or Bible study.

**Depend on God** — God is entrusting us with His precious children, and He expects us to steward them well! We need to prepare well for each class as well as pray regularly for each child.

**Curriculum** – The Bible is the source for your curriculum. There are many good stories in the Old Testament and the New Testament, which can be used to teach a variety of lessons. Examples of Old Testament stories: The creation story, David and Goliath, Daniel and his three friends, Joseph and his brothers, Elijah and the widow. Examples of New Testament stories: Jesus feeds the five thousand, Jesus heals the leper, Jesus calms the storm, the story of Zacheus, the story of Ananias and Sapherah.

Before the first week of children’s ministry, prepare curriculum for at least one month ahead of time—four or five lessons. This is one method for creating the lessons:



- **Story.** Choose a Bible story that will help the children learn more about God and how to obey Him. Think about the key idea that you want the children to remember. Also think about how to tell it best to keep the children's attention.

Example: **Story: Jesus calms the storm** from Matthew 8:23-27. Key idea: Jesus can help us when we are afraid.

- **Discussion Time.** For each story, think of some questions to ask that will show you if they understood the story and tell them the key idea.

Example: **Discussion time:** Why were the disciples afraid? What did they do when they felt afraid? What did Jesus do? What are some of the things that you get frightened of? What do you do when you are afraid? What can you do the next time you are afraid?

Teaching: When we are afraid, we can pray to Jesus. The wind and the waves obeyed Jesus, because they were created by Him. Are you created by Him? (Yes!) Then we must also obey Jesus when He says not to be afraid. If we trust in Him, He will help and strengthen us.

- **Activity.** An activity can help the children remember the key idea. The activity could be acting out the story, colouring a picture, or creating a role play of how they could apply what they learned in their lives.

Example: **Activity:** Depending on how much time we have, we may do one or all of the following activities.

- Children love acting, so I will let them act out the story. More than one child may want the chance to pretend to be Jesus calming the storm, so we may do our play several times to give each one a turn. This repetition is a fun way of helping the children remember the story.
- With crayons and paper, I will have the children draw a boat in a storm. If the children can read and write, I will have them write the memory verse below their picture.
- I will ask the children to think of something that scares them (a parent getting sick, an angry dog...). Then I will give the children a chance to act out these scary situations, each time praying to Jesus to help them not to be afraid.

- **Memory Verse.** Include one key verse from the Bible relating to the story and help the children to memorize the verse. The verse does not have to be from the story, but should reinforce the key idea. Make sure the children understand the verse before you help them memorize it.

Example: "Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand." - Isaiah 41:10

Once you make four or five lessons like this, you have a curriculum ready!

## Money Skills

### Managing Money in a God-Honouring Way Saved Our Marriage

Mathew was a potato farmer in a small village. He and his wife Martha had two children, aged 2 and 4. He had inherited property from his father and did not have to do much to earn enough to keep his family going. While Mathew tended the potatoes, Martha kept a small vegetable garden and egg-laying chickens. Now and

then, Martha loved to buy herself a new dress. Mathew liked to enjoy the evenings with his friends at the local tea shop. They were happy with life.

As the children grew older and began school, their monthly expenses grew, but their income did not grow. They had not saved any money before, so now they were really struggling as their expenses increased. They often argued over how their money should be spent. She accused him of wasting money at the tea shop. He told her she didn't need anymore dresses. They were no longer happy, but always tense, worried, and angry.



During those days the pastor began teaching about money management at their church. Mathew and Martha learnt many new things. The pastor said

that God is not only interested in spiritual things but is Lord of all areas of life and that God cares about how we spend and earn money.

One teaching that struck Mathew was that God wanted him to work hard so his family would have enough for their needs and also to give to the poor. He also learned that he should be using his money better—making sure that their needs were provided for before paying for extra things. Mathew had not been diligent in his tithing either. The pastor had said that God will hold people responsible for how wisely they use their money. He wanted to obey God.

When they got back home, Mathew sat down with Martha to discuss what they had learned. They prayed and asked God to forgive them for the way they had used money in the past and also to help them use their money wisely. After they prayed, Martha said she would stop buying dresses because that was not a need. Mathew decided to stop wasting money on his friends at the tea shop. They also agreed to give God His tithe, even though they weren't sure if what was left would be enough to live on. For the next few weeks, they followed these commitments, and at the end of the month they found that all their family's needs had been met and they even had a little money left over!



They remembered what the pastor said about using their gifts and talents, so they prayed about what to do. Martha loved to design clothes and she was good at tailoring. She realized that she could use the little extra money they had to buy material and make dresses to sell at the market. Mathew also saw that there was much more he could do with their land—instead of only growing potatoes, he could

add other crops. It was hard work for both of them, but they found joy in using the skills, talents, and resources God had blessed them with. They no longer fought, and their home was again a happy place to live.

A year later Mathew and Martha testified in front of the church how the teaching on money management had changed the way they used their money and even saved their marriage.

They said, "When we began to practice Godly principles of managing money, we experienced God's blessing in all areas of our lives."

How about you? Are you following Godly principles of money management in your life?

Here are three principles that Mathew and Martha learned about money management:

1. **Give generously:** Many people feel they cannot tithe because they don't have enough. But the Bible says its their failure to tithe that has caused them poverty. When we follow the principles set by God of tithing and giving from whatever we have, we learn to trust God more than money. We get joy by giving because, as Jesus taught us, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."
2. **Spend less than you earn:** Think about the last few years—have you run out of money before harvest? Then you are spending more than you earn, and you need to look at ways you can cut your expenses. Are you spending on things that you can do without? Martha did not need to

buy so many new dresses, and Mathew was spending unnecessary money at the tea shop. When they cut back on these two expenses they found they had enough money. Ask God to help you to recognize the difference between needs and wants.

3. **Increase your income:** Another way to meet your financial needs is to increase your income. How do you do that? In the story,

Martha decided to buy material to tailor dresses and sell them at the market. In this way, she used her God-given skills to increase her income. Mathew also looked at how he could better use his plot of land to increase his income. Pray and ask God what skills and resources He has given you and how you can use them to glorify Him, bless others, and provide for your family.

## Health

### How to Treat Diarrhea

Diarrhea is especially dangerous for babies and small children. Usually no medicine is needed but special care must be taken because babies and young children can die very quickly from dehydration as a result of diarrhea. Dehydration is a lack of water in the body. To treat diarrhea and prevent dehydration it is important to give extra liquids to drink immediately and to continue feeding.

For babies under six months old, keep giving breast milk often. If more fluids are needed then give water that is safe to drink – such as water that has been boiled and then allowed to cool.

For children over six months and adults, options for fluids are:

- **Food-based fluids** – Such as homemade soup, rice water, coconut water, or yoghurt drinks.
- **Salt-sugar solution** – Mix one litre of safe water with one teaspoon of salt and eight teaspoons of sugar. Before adding the sugar, taste the drink to check it is not too salty. It should be less salty than tears. You can add



the juice of half a lime, lemon, or orange to improve the taste.

- **Cereal drink** – Mix one litre of safe water with one teaspoon of salt and eight heaped teaspoons of cereal such as powdered rice, finely ground maize, wheat flour or cooked and mashed potatoes. Boil for five minutes to form a watery porridge. Cereal drinks can spoil in a few hours, so keep in a refrigerator or make a new drink every two or three hours.

When correctly prepared, cereal drinks are often cheaper, safer and more effective than Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS) which can be bought in many places. If using packets of ORS, it is very important to know the exact quantity of safe water to add.

Give as much extra fluid as the person wants, giving small sips often, even if the person vomits. Children under two years old should be given half a cup after each watery stool. Give this slowly from a cup or using a teaspoon, rather than a bottle. Older children need at least one cup for each watery stool. An adult should drink one or two extra cups an hour.



# Acts of Love Stories

## Reaching Out with Hygiene Help in Madagascar

After beginning to study TCT, one church in Madagascar decided to reach out to a nearby community—the conditions are so bad there that everyone calls the place “Poverty City.” The church members gathered some food and took it to Poverty City as a simple Act of Love. The people were grateful, but said, “Thank you for the food. But our biggest problem is that we can’t sleep. When it rains, the water pours through our roofs. And all night, we are bitten by fleas.” The church members wanted to help. They saw that everywhere—inside and outside the homes—was full of rubbish. One woman earned income by collecting trash in another area, but since she didn’t know where else to put it, she kept it all at her house. The people even slept in filth. The church began teaching the people of Poverty City the importance of hygiene and cleanliness. Then they worked alongside the families to clean their homes and property, teaching them how to keep things clean as they went. They rebuilt the roof of one widow’s home. This Act of Love cost the church only time and hard work, but was very valued the families living in Poverty City.

## A Marriage Saved in Togo

Mary was a faithful worshipper at the Apostolic Church in Notse. She loved the Lord, but at home, she felt her marriage was sinking. Her husband was not a Christian, and they often fought. She felt overwhelmed and helpless to save her marriage. Then, one Sunday, her pastor stood to give the sermon and, instead of preaching on one of the expected topics, he began to teach the lessons from the TCT Module: Marriage and Family. He explained the biblical roles of husbands and wives, the way God made people so different from each other, and some ways to resolve conflicts in marriage. Mary returned home from church filled with hope that her marriage could be restored. She shared some of what she had learned with her husband and asked him to come to church with her to learn more. The next Sunday they attended church together. Her husband too was touched by the teaching about marriage and family, and the couple went to the pastor after the service to confess the problems they had been having at home. The pastor encouraged them to follow the biblical principles from the Marriage and Family Module and prayed with them. Today, Mary and her husband have a good marriage, he has become a Christian, and they praise God together for healing their relationship!

## A Church Gains a New Reputation in the Philippines

Sometimes the actions of one person ruin the reputation of a whole church. That happened to one church of 25 members in the Philippines. Two years ago, a local missionary came to live in the community and help out the pastor. But while he was serving with the church, he did something terrible—he kidnapped the baby of one of his relatives and demanded a million pesos (20,000 USD) in ransom to return the child. The community witnessed his evil actions, and had shunned the church ever since.



The pastor of this church began to study TCT. As he learned about Acts of Love, he immediately had an idea of how to serve his community. He returned home and taught the TCT module to the church, sharing his idea as well—there was a very rough path through their village that about 30 households frequently used, and the church ought to pave it. They had only three bags of cement, but decided to go forward with what little they had. Perhaps they could pave only a small section of the path, yet they began the work. Thirteen church members joined in on the day of project and, as they worked, a local official noticed them and asked what they were doing. When they explained that they were paving the path for the community, the official was moved to contribute 10 more bags of cement and a tractor-load of gravel. He even helped with some of the work! Some people from the families nearby also came to help out while others gave the workers food and juice. By 5 pm that day, they finished 50 meters of concrete path, and they had gained a new reputation in their community!

Now people are talking to the church members again, appreciate their help, and are even sending their children to Sunday School. To God be the glory!

Calvary Worship Centre – Thimilaitheevu cleaned the grounds of a school, helping to prevent illnesses among the students. United Pentecostal Church – Nawalapitiya also put the Module 1 lessons into action by cleaning a community playground. A local politician saw them at work and, wanting to help, he immediately rented a bulldozer to level the ground. These Acts of Love are already improving their relationships with their communities. People are becoming more accepting of the church, more friendly, and more open to talk with them. Praise God for using small acts to heal relationships!



## Stepping Out in Obedience After Module One in Sri Lanka

After studying only Module 1 of TCT, many churches in Sri Lanka have already begun doing Acts of Love in their communities. Assemblies of God Church – Komari had always focused on evangelism, but after learning the importance of showing love, they organized a day to clean the area around their local clinic. Similarly,

## Bringing Water to the Community in DR Congo

One church in DR Congo wanted to do something important for their community. They realized that one of the biggest problems for their community was water. There was a spring nearby, but it was unprotected. Sometimes it flowed and people gathered there to collect water, but other times it didn't, and then the people had to travel much farther and pay \$1 US to take water from another spring. When the nearby spring was flowing, many people would crowd the area. The strongest would push aside others to get their water first, and so arguments and conflict arose. Besides that, the area would get dirty and much water went to waste.

After the church leaders met with their local Chief of Water, they decided to protect the spring. They saw that God had given some of their young men skills in

building. So the church members contributed to buy the supplies, and the young men built a structure to protect the spring. They put a roof over it to keep it clean and capped the spring with a valve to conserve water. Finally, they hired a guard to watch over the water point. The guard makes sure people keep an orderly line, and he collects 7 cents US from each person coming to draw water. This money will pay the guard and ensure the spring can be maintained if anything breaks down.



The whole community is thrilled with the clean, reliable water, the fair price, and that there are no longer conflicts. They glorify God for this provision and recognize the importance of the church in their community.

## **A Church Uses All God Has Given Them in Zimbabwe**

The church in Siabuwa used to believe they had nothing, but studying TCT has changed their thinking. After hearing about the Acts of Love, the church has done many things to show love to their community. First, they served the most vulnerable. The cell group came together to support a blind man. Then they turned their attention to larger community problems. A group of four church members was formed into a trust for the purpose of identifying local resources. They realized that there is a river full of fish surrounding the village. Because there is no market nearby, no one had bothered fishing much before. But now they are fishing and mothers are selling fish out of their homes. With the money they've made selling fish,

the women's group bought five cows! The church has also built houses to replace huts. All of this was accomplished because God helped the church to see that He had not left them with nothing, but given them so much. Now the church is asking God to help them address even bigger problems. They are contributing toward an ambulance, constructing a dam, and looking at sinking deep wells. All glory to God!

## **Loving Gangsters in DR Congo**

Many communities have problems with gangs. Because work can be hard to find, many young men spend their time drinking, doing drugs, making trouble, and stealing. As they have studied TCT, many churches in DRC have begun to ask God how to show love to these gangsters. As God has given them ideas, they have helped the gangsters to get trained for gainful work and to find employment. Some former gangsters are now growing and selling produce. Some mine the sand from the river and sell it. Others have become carpenters. In one area, the church enlisted the gangsters to help make protections against erosion. Another pastor asked his brother who has a driving school to train five young men without charge; now the former gangsters are drivers and taximen. God is using the churches to help these young men see the abilities God has given them and to use them for the betterment of themselves and the community. The result is transformed lives and reduced crime in their communities. Praise God for helping these churches to show love to gangsters!

