

Lesson 5: Building God's Kingdom By Serving Others

**TRUTH
CENTERED
TRANSFORMATION**

MODULE 2

Part 1: Learning to serve others

Mrs. Lee is a real woman in Asia, but her name has been changed. She longed to help the poor families in her community, especially those without work. She started to visit some of the families every month looking for ways to help them make a living. Here are three of the many stories of how she has been able to help families. These stories are all true.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

In your groups read the three Mrs. Lee stories and answer the questions below

Story 1 – Mrs. Lee and the flower garden

In her area, there was a poor family with two children. Both mother and father were unemployed. Mrs. Lee stopped by to visit and noticed there was a small piece of land with soil in front of their home. 'Why don't you plant some flowers?' she asked. 'You can make your home more beautiful and also sell them in the market nearby.'

The mother in this family did just that and began taking the flowers she grew to the market where she sold them. She soon found that buyers were asking for other types of flowers as well, but she only had a small piece of land and couldn't plant any other types. This mother, however, began purchasing flowers from other growers and selling them, alongside hers, for a profit. Now that she had a small space in the market to sell her flowers, she thought to herself, 'I could sell other things as well!' She wakes up early every morning to buy bananas and coconuts to sell at the market at her flower stand.

Story 2 – Mrs. Lee and the sweet potatoes

Another family that needed help wanted to work but didn't know what to do and didn't have any special skills. They did work as daily labourers, but they often weren't able to find work. Mrs. Lee could see that this family was hard working and really did want to work, so she went to visit another family in the church that were sweet potato farmers. She asked them whether sweet potato farming was profitable, if there was a good market, and what supplies are needed to start sweet potato farming.

When she learned that it was a good job, she explained to the family that God has called us to love our neighbours and look after the poor. She asked them if they would be willing to teach the poor family how to be sweet potato farmers. They agreed. Mrs. Lee introduced the

two families. The poor family was excited that now they would be able to do something, and they quickly went and rented a small piece of land and everything that was necessary to start. At the end of the year, they had a good harvest and were able to pay the rent on the land, the money for the seed, and still have a good profit for the family.

Story 3 – Mrs. Lee and family reconciliation

The third family Mrs. Lee wanted to help had been separated from their parents. The parents believed that their son and his family were useless and wouldn't amount to anything. Mrs. Lee met with the family to try and reconcile the two sides. Mrs. Lee guaranteed that she would meet regularly with the family and help them to improve their lives if the parents were willing to accept the family back and help them a little. As a result, the parents decided to trust their son again and decided to loan him some money so he could start a scrap metal business. He now buys old, used things which are made of iron and sells them to the local recycling shop. Now he is able to support his family and feels like he has dignity.

1. What did Mrs. Lee do for each of the families?
2. What was the result of Mrs. Lee's actions?
3. What would have happened if Mrs. Lee had just given money or food to each of these people?
4. If Mrs. Lee had given them money each week for two years and then stopped, do you think that their lives would have improved as much as they did?
5. What is the difference between helping with money and the way that Mrs. Lee helped?
6. Imagine if many of us started acting like Mrs. Lee—visiting families and listening, looking and trying to understand their problems, and then looking for solutions. What would be the impact on your community?

Part 2: A Family in Need

Imagine there is a family that lives near your church. The husband is usually gone, but once every month or two he returns for a few days and brings back a little money for the family. The wife looks after their three children and none of them attend school. Usually, the children are running around barefoot and wearing very old clothes. Their house is extremely run down and leaks terribly in the rain. Sometimes the children can be heard crying because they are hungry.

- What are some of the needs that this family has?

More than anything, this woman probably feels hopeless. Many people who aren't working aren't necessarily lazy as we might expect. Often, they are overwhelmed by the difficulties of

life and have trouble believing that they can change anything. Your most important job is to help them see that the situation can change by helping them to start changing. While a small gift of rice to this family is okay, if you do that more than once you are just encouraging them to believe that they are hopeless. What they need is hope that life can change.

- What are some ways that you could help by being like Mrs. Lee to this family?

Part 3: Community

This is a true story of a man who moved with his family to an area where there were no Christians because they wanted to share Christ with the people. He wanted to see God's Kingdom built and people's lives restored in every area—mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially.

One Christian Family Makes a Difference

This is the story of how one Christian family helped to build God's Kingdom in a non-Christian village. The village was located in the Himalayan mountains. A few kilometres away from the village was a tea plantation. This provided the main work for the people in the village. However, the wages were so low that the people struggled to survive even with jobs.

The village was made up of about twenty-five run-down, poorly-constructed, wood homes with tin roofs. There were no latrines in the village. Because it was so high up the mountain, it was very cold; however, the children were barefoot and had swollen stomachs.

Each house was on a small plot of land. The cooking was done in a separate little smoke-filled cooking shack over an open fire, with the pot balanced on three stones. There were a few chickens running in and out of the houses, and the compounds were dirty.

The nearest school was two kilometres away. It was too far for the children to walk daily, and they had work to do around the home. Therefore, most of the children did not attend school. Many adults could not read or write. Therefore, they were always being taken advantage of by those in other villages who could.

There were very few gardens because the nearest water was a reservoir two kilometres away. It was hard enough to bring water for drinking and washing, let alone for watering gardens. There once was a pipeline from this reservoir, but it no longer worked, and the people hadn't done anything about getting it repaired.

Rain was sporadic except for the one growing season when there was normally enough rain to get their main crop of rice. There was not enough room or time to raise vegetables. If they were lucky, they could harvest enough rice to get them through until the next harvest.

The people were Hindu, therefore they worshipped many different gods. There are over one million gods, which Hindus must appease and worship. The village had many little idols to the Hindu gods. Each time the villagers ate, they would drop some food on the ground for the wandering spirits.

There was a sense of defeat and hopelessness. Their only hope was that maybe in the next life they would be reincarnated into a better situation. But there was also the chance that, if they made the gods unhappy, they could be reincarnated as a rat or a dog. They felt trapped, with no way out and no way to better themselves.

Lepcha was an evangelist who moved to this area. He studied to learn the basics about helping others improve their health in a one-month course. Once he completed the course, he moved with his family to the village so they could live there to help their neighbours by sharing what they had learned. They had a very clean compound with a cooking house that had a raised fireplace, which made cooking easier and used less firewood. They had a small coop to keep their chickens. They planted a small vegetable garden, which improved their children's nutrition. They had an outside latrine, and their children didn't have worms or diarrhoea as often as other children in the village.

Lepcha installed gutters on the tin roof of his house and placed rain collection barrels under them to collect water when the sporadic rains came. Others copied this idea and, now when it rains, they too have water.

Lepcha then got the people in the community to work together to lay a pipeline from the reservoir to the village, and now the villagers have plenty of water, even enough to water their new vegetable gardens. Many of the people have copied the chicken houses and have built latrines that don't smell or have flies.

When Lepcha's family arrived, they began to teach adults and children who wanted to learn how to read and write. They started by teaching children and teenagers how to read. Today, the village has its own school for children up through fourth grade.

Today there is a small church building because now twenty-three of the twenty-five families have a personal relationship with Christ. All of this is because this one family shared Christ with their words and their deeds.

The people have a sense of accomplishment, and they see that they can live healthy lives because one family cared enough to come and share their life with them.

This same story is being told time after time in villages in northern India and eastern Nepal. Today the same things are happening in 120 villages in the area. People's lives are changed physically. But the villages are also being changed spiritually as 107 home fellowships have been started, with the largest twelve having 200 members.

- What were some of the changes that Lepcha brought to the community? Look again at the story and make a list under the headings mental, physical, spiritual, and social.
- How did he bring these changes? Who did he start with?
- How is the community different because of Lepcha?
- How can you be like Lepcha in your community?