



**EQUIPPING
ALLIES**

Facilitator
Guide

Equipping Allies

Facilitator Guide

By: J. Mark Bowers, Janessa Chupp

Editorial Team: Jerilyn Sanders, Amy Kuenzel

The Chalmers Center equips churches with resources and tools to walk alongside people who are poor, breaking the spiritual, social, and material bonds of poverty. As a result, churches model Jesus' heart for the poor in practical ways, showing His care and power over every part of life.

To learn more, visit **chalmers.org**.

Adapted and Abridged By: J. Mark Bowers for use by readers of *Helping Without Hurting in Church Benevolence*.

To access the full-length *Equipping Allies* training, become a *Faith & Finances* or *Work Life* facilitator. Visit chalmers.org/train for further information.

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Chalmers Center
507 McFarland Rd
Lookout Mountain, GA
30750 USA

info@chalmers.org
chalmers.org/benevolence

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INTRODUCTION

GETTING STARTED

Equipping Allies is a half-day training designed to equip volunteers to walk alongside low-income people in your benevolence ministry. As described in *Helping Without Hurting in Church Benevolence*, supportive relationships are a key element in addressing the complex factors that contribute to poverty. *Equipping Allies* seeks to prepare volunteers to enter into that process in a healthy manner.

WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE AND WHO SHOULD FACILITATE EQUIPPING ALLIES?

The curriculum is designed for groups of potential allies ranging from 5-20 people. Allies should be people who display the characteristics discussed in Chapter 5 of *Helping Without Hurting in Church Benevolence*. We recommend that a church leader who has read *Helping Without Hurting in Church Benevolence* facilitate the training.

Equipping Allies begins with an information box that contains a summary of the objectives for the training, as well as the needed materials, preparations, and time to conduct it. Review this information carefully. The “Materials Needed” section lists the items you’ll need to gather before the training. The “Preparation” section lists actions needed before the day begins—like creating flipcharts or printing handouts.

ADDITIONAL FEATURES OF THE EQUIPPING ALLIES MATERIAL

- Regular font = specific information or instructions for the facilitator to read or paraphrase to the participants.
- *Italics font* = instructions for the facilitator. Do not read this text to the participants.
- **Bold font** = highlights action verbs that connect the participants to the content through action-oriented tasks.
- Arrow (➤) = specific open questions for the facilitator to ask. Deliver this text as it is written. Allow for discussion time and a variety of voices to be heard.

PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD FACILITATION OF *EQUIPPING ALLIES*¹

Participation and dialogue are essential in adult learning. As the facilitator, you are also a learner. The potential allies come to the event with rich experiences and add value to the learning, just as allies will then learn from the low-income people with whom they will be walking. The facilitator is responsible for engaging the participants and listening to them with respect. It is important to establish a safe, affirming environment so the allies will participate in discussions, share their experiences, and feel comfortable asking questions.

FACILITATING GROUP DISCUSSION

- Listen carefully to the participants, and thank them for speaking. When people feel safe, they speak more freely, give honest answers, ask questions, and ultimately learn more.
- If people give a very short answer, you might want to encourage them to say more. You could say, “Tell us more about that.”
- Avoid interrupting people while they are talking. If you must interrupt someone who is talking too long, do so, but apologize.
- Try to have as many people as possible participate in the discussion. Encourage this by saying, “Let’s hear from a new voice...”
- Use paired discussions where indicated so that more people, especially very quiet ones, will have the opportunity to share their thoughts.
- Be familiar with important points to avoid reading them word-for-word.
- After an important point, pause to let participants think about it.
- Look at the participants as you give the information. Even if you read the information, look up occasionally so that people do not feel ignored.
- Watch people for signs of confusion. If you see signs of confusion, stop and ask what questions people have.

ASKING OPEN QUESTIONS

- Use open questions to draw out ideas, opinions, and experiences. These questions help participants think for themselves, discuss the issues and make decisions. A closed question sounds like this: “Any comments?” An example of an open question: “What can you add to this discussion?”

¹ Derived from *Savings: You Can Do It!*, by Freedom From Hunger, 2008.

- Pause after asking an open question to allow participants time to think. Look around the group expectantly as you wait for someone to answer.
- If no one responds, ask the same question using different words and pause again to indicate you are waiting for responses.
- Once someone volunteers a response, take some time before proceeding to the next question; ask if someone else has something to add to the first response.
- Listen to the responses for important points and commend the speakers.

CREATING SAFETY

- Learners need to feel that their ideas and contributions will be valued. Encourage even small efforts. Be careful not to judge or humiliate learners in front of others.
- Some subjects, especially related to relationships, money, and poverty, may be difficult to discuss in a group. Be sensitive and aware of the participants' reactions and protect their feelings.

To learn more about effective facilitation techniques, get trained in the Chalmers Center's Faith & Finances and Work Life programs. Visit chalmers.org/train for more information.

Equipping Allies

Sample Schedule

WHO? 12 potential allies in our benevolence ministry

WHEN? Saturday, April 24th, 2015, 8 am – 11:30 am

WHERE? Peace Community Church, Fellowship Hall

Breakfast and Introductions — 8:00-8:30

Session 1 — 8:30-10:00

Break — 10:00-10:30

Session 2 — 10:30-11:30

EQUIPPING ALLIES OVERVIEW

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, we will have:

1. **Introduced** ourselves by **describing** good and bad experiences with a mentor;
2. **Considered** how definitions of poverty can be informed by the four key relationships;
3. **Named** ways low-income people typically experience brokenness in the four key relationships and **connected** this to the concept of marred identity;
4. **Named** ways that members of middle/upper classes typically experience brokenness in the four key relationships and **connected** this to the concept of god complexes;
5. **Examined** implications through a case study on god complexes and marred identities and **committed** to applying new knowledge;
6. **Reflected** on and **named** examples of the stages of change;
7. **Described** internal and external factors contributing to poverty;
8. **Examine** cultural differences among socioeconomic groups; and
9. **Prayed** for reliance on the grace of God as we begin building relationships.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Flipchart/stand
- Sticky notes (yellow and blue)
- Assorted pens and markers
- Technology for showing video
- *Ally Training Notes* for each participant [end of document]

PREPARATION NEEDED

- Prepare flipcharts: *Good Mentors; Four Key Relationships*
- Print *Ally Training Notes*

TIME

150 minutes (2.5 hours)

SESSION 1

INTRODUCTION (10 MINUTES)

Thank you all for your interest in becoming an ally! Our purpose today is to equip you practically with knowledge, skills, and attitudes to walk alongside low-income people in our benevolence ministry. We want to do that by:

- Examining some of our underlying assumptions about the causes of and solutions to poverty; and
- Considering the hidden dynamics of relationships across cultural and socioeconomic lines.

In order to begin this process of preparing to enter into the ally-participant relationship, let's **read** the objectives that we will accomplish together over the next several hours.

- What questions do you have before we open in prayer?

[Open in prayer]

Now, let's begin with some introductions. In two or three sentences, **introduce** yourself and **share** what prompted you to get involved as an ally. Quickly **name** one thing you hope to get from this training and one thing about being an ally that perhaps makes you nervous.

Thanks everyone for sharing honestly.

TASK 1

DESCRIBE GOOD AND BAD EXPERIENCES WITH A MENTOR IN THE PAST (15 MINUTES)

As an ally, you will be the primary long-term point of contact for participants in our benevolence ministry. This is much like a mentor, but because the term *mentor* can imply a superior-inferior relationship, or an age difference, we prefer to use the term *ally*.

We've all probably been in relationships with somebody who was coming alongside us as a mentor, whether formally through a mentoring program or informally through a relationship with an older person at church. If you're like me, some of these experiences have gone really well, and some of them have gone not so well.

1A: Turn to a partner and get acquainted by describing your experiences with a mentor figure in your life. **Share** good and bad experiences you have had with mentors.

After 5 minutes, we'll **hear** from those in the large group who want to share and **write** several factors that make up good mentors on the flipchart entitled "Good Mentors."

Thanks, everyone. These are great examples to keep in mind as we think about what makes a good ally. Along with these factors, we usually relate best to someone we feel is willing to listen and will try to understand our perspective. But what if there are significant cultural and socioeconomic differences between allies and participants? Today, we'll consider how we can be the best listeners, even if our life experiences differ.

TASK 2

CONSIDER HOW DEFINITIONS OF POVERTY CAN BE INFORMED BY THE FOUR KEY RELATIONSHIPS (20 MINUTES)

2A: Think about how you define poverty. In small groups of 3 or 4, **discuss** this question for 3 minutes:

- How do you define poverty?

2B: Share some of the definitions you heard at your tables. We'll **write** some examples on the flipchart entitled: "What is Poverty?"

Thanks, everyone! We can already tell from these lists that poverty does not involve just one simple issue. Rather, it is quite complex and multifaceted.

2C: Now let's **watch** a video from Dr. Brian Fikkert, founder of the Chalmers Center, entitled "How We Define Poverty". As you watch this video, **note** the theology of poverty underlying this definition of poverty.

Facilitator note: This video can be found online at <http://vimeo.com/33181145>.

2D: Compare:

- How is this definition similar to the definitions we've already discussed?
- What is different or new to you?

[Lack of resources is a symptom of poverty; poverty is brokenness in the four key relationships; add some of these comments to the flipchart.]

2E: Examine the diagram of the Four Key Relationships in your notes. These relationships are where we can most clearly see the brokenness of sin, but also the redemption of Christ. When God created us, he intended for all four of these relationships to be healthy and working properly. However, because of the Fall, these relationships got messed up. Each of us, no matter how much money we have, experiences brokenness in our relationships with God, self, others, and the rest of creation.

2F: The book *When Helping Hurts* describes these four key relationships. Let's **rotate** around the room and **read** the summary in the box in your notes entitled "Four Key Relationships."

FOUR KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Relationship with God – This is our primary relationship; the other three relationships flow out of this one. We were made to serve and give praise to our Creator through our thoughts, words, and actions. When we do this, we experience the presence of God as our Father and live in a joyful, intimate relationship with Him as His children.

Relationship with Self – People are uniquely created in the image of God and thus have inherent worth and value. While we must remember that we are not God, we have the high calling of reflecting God’s being, making us superior to the rest of creation and esteeming us with God-given dignity.

Relationship with Others – God created us to live in loving relationship with one another. We are not islands! We are made to know one another, to love one another, and to encourage one another in a supportive community to use the gifts God has given to each of us to fulfill our callings.

Relationship with the Rest of Creation – God created us to be stewards, people who understand, protect, subdue, and manage the world that God has created in order to preserve it and to produce bounty. Note that while God made the world perfect, he left it incomplete. This means that while the world was created to be without defect, God called humans to interact with creation, to make possibilities into realities, and to sustain ourselves through the fruits of our stewardship.

(Corbett and Fikkert, 2009)

- What questions do you have about the four key relationships?

Now let’s look more in-depth at how people from different socioeconomic groups can experience brokenness and healing in these spheres.

TASK 3

NAME WAYS THOSE WITH A LOWER INCOME TYPICALLY EXPERIENCE BROKENNESS IN THE FOUR KEY RELATIONSHIPS AND CONNECT THIS TO THE CONCEPT OF MARRED IDENTITY (10 MINUTES)

3A: To begin, let’s **think** about those who have a low income. **Join** with two other partners and spend 3 minutes at your table **naming** different ways people who feel they are struggling to make ends meet might experience brokenness in each of these relationships - with God, self, others, and the rest of creation. Next, use the yellow sticky notes to **post** examples on each of the four key relationships on the chart of how someone with a low income might experience brokenness.

After 3 minutes, we’ll **share** these examples in the large group.

- Who will come **read** all of the sticky notes aloud?

Thank you all for your honest reflections. As we are continuing to see, poverty goes much deeper than just a lack of economic resources - lower-income people tend to have a “marred identity” in which the experience of poverty has sold them the lie that they are the “needy,” the “have-nots,” the “valueless,” or the “condemned by God.”

TASK 4

NAME WAYS MEMBERS OF MIDDLE AND UPPER CLASSES TYPICALLY EXPERIENCE BROKENNESS IN THE FOUR KEY RELATIONSHIPS AND CONNECT THIS TO THE CONCEPT OF GOD COMPLEXES (15 MINUTES)

Perhaps as you completed this exercise, you became acutely aware of your own brokenness. Many of us in the upper or middle class may not have struggled with marred identity in the same way as those with lower incomes. Our own brokenness may manifest itself in different ways, yet it impacts our ability to have whole relationships, as well. Our brokenness also significantly contributes to the problem of poverty, even when we attempt to help!

4A: This time, **think** about a typical North American with a middle- or upper-class background. As a table group, spend 3 minutes **naming** different ways these people might experience brokenness in their relationships with God, self, others, and the rest of creation. Many of us are likely a part of this demographic. **Label** each of the four relationships on the chart with a blue sticky note that names examples of how these people might experience brokenness.

After 3 minutes, we’ll **share** these in the large group.

- Who would be willing to come and **read** these to the group?

Oftentimes those with a middle- to upper-income tend to have a “god complex.” The experience of affluence has subtly sold them the lie that they are the “rich,” the “haves,” the “saviors and changers,” and even the “specially blessed by God.”

The deception of those with a lower income and those with a middle- to upper-income keep them from experiencing what we all really need: the grace of God.

4B: Share: In your experience, what can happen when the god complexes of middle- to upper-income people collide with the marred identities of those with less income?

The potential to actually exacerbate brokenness on both sides is particularly high in relationships between these groups. This happens when, for instance:

THOSE WHO HAVE MORE...	THOSE WHO HAVE LESS...
Those who have more give material hand-outs and are solidified in their identity as the “haves”	Those who have less ask and receive material hand-outs and are solidified as the “have-nots”

THOSE WHO HAVE MORE...	THOSE WHO HAVE LESS...
Those who have more plan and give instructions and advice and are solidified in their identity as the ones with answers and who have it all together	Those who have less follow instructions and receive advice and are solidified in their identity as the ones who need help and don't have ideas
Those who have more speak about the lessons they've learned through their successes, and are solidified in their identity as the successful, blessed	Those who have less speak about their failures and are solidified in their identity as the needy, incompetent failures

(Rhodes, 2013)

TASK 5

EXAMINE IMPLICATIONS THROUGH A CASE STUDY OF GOD COMPLEXES AND MARRED IDENTITIES AND COMMIT TO APPLYING NEW KNOWLEDGE (30 MINUTES)

5A: To **examine** this dynamic further, **read** this case study about an ally and participant. **Form** groups of 3 – work with someone that you don't know well or from across the room! In your groups of 3, **discuss** what will happen in terms of the four key relationships, god complexes, and marred identities according to the question.

After 10 minutes, we'll **hear** reflections from each group.

ESTHER AND MARIE

Esther grew up in the community of Eastside Park. She dropped out of high school at age 14 after her father, who regularly abused her mother, was killed in a gang conflict. Esther has worked three jobs in her life, two at fast food restaurants, and all for less than 3 months. She now works the early shift at Waffle House for tips and no benefits. Today was a typical day for Esther. She dragged herself out of bed at 5 am, awoke her 8 and 5-year-old children, and walked them to the bus stop before catching her own bus to work. One hour and three transfers later, she arrived already weary. After getting cut early, Esther picked up her 5-year-old from school, then stopped by the grocery store for food and cigarettes with the \$9 she earned in tips that day. With no bus fare left, she walked home, lugging the grocery bag and cranky 5-year-old by the arm. After settling in at home, the kids stayed home alone and ate cereal for dinner so Esther could get to the laundromat to do three loads. She got back in time to tuck them in by 9 pm, then passed out in bed herself shortly after.

Marie comes from an upper middle class family, and went to Vanderbilt for her undergrad and Rhodes for her MBA. She's a successful business owner, and a women's ministry leader at her large middle-class church. Marie is meticulous about managing her finances, and works over 60 hours a week managing the graphic design firm that she and her husband started 15 years ago. She has recently heard the call to help the poor in her community, but really, she doesn't know any low-income people personally until she meets Esther through a financial education program at church. The first time she visits Esther in Eastside Park, she can't believe anybody in her city lives in such conditions. Later that night, Marie is shaken up. "I don't even know how she survives," she tells her husband with tears in her eyes. She looks out the window into her historic neighborhood's newly renovated park, thinking about the stark contrast between their worlds.

Both Esther and Marie attend Christ Community Church downtown. Recently, Esther came to Marie, her ally,

asking for help paying the electric bill. This time of year has been tough with the holidays, paying bills, buying winter clothes, and affording presents for the kids, especially when losing shifts at the Waffle House. Marie thought about her own Christmas holiday with her family, about the trip they had made to California to see her parents and the presents she and her husband were able to buy their kids this year. All in all, it had been a great holiday; the only real stress had been being too busy. Esther's Christmas was so different from hers, and this made Marie feel guilty. She has the power to help Esther...how can she refuse? After all, Esther is living in a dangerous, low-rent apartment, and she has little money to feed her 2 kids. When Esther called, in tears, asking Marie for \$30, Marie drove over to Eastside Park. She agreed to pay her electric bill. Obviously, Esther cannot pay the bill herself. Marie locked the car doors as she drove away from Esther's apartment. She felt good about being able to help her – almost heroic. There's something really great about being involved, getting to know someone, and being able to step in and lift them out of their troubles. Marie was eager to keep pressing on in her relationship with Esther, because it made her feel significant.

But, later that evening, Marie's high seemed to wear off, and she found herself feeling sorry and irritated at Esther's situation – her Christmas, her job, her children. She started to think about all the times the deacons at church helped her with bills in the past year. Why aren't things getting better? When she went to ask her church about this and look through the records, she realized that individuals, or the church, had paid nine bills for Esther in the past twelve months. Goodness! Marie thought. She felt frustrated that after one year of helping Esther, even after participating in the financial education class together, it seems like nothing much has really changed in her life. She's still working bad shifts at Waffle House, and she still barely pays her bills every month.

5B: In your small groups, **consider** each of the following actions. For each one, what will happen in terms of the four key relationships, god complexes, and marred identity if Marie...

- Continues to offer Esther money for help with bills, but only essentials like the electric bill – not with snacks or cigarettes.
- Refuses to have any financial connection with her, but will have her over for regular meals and discussions on the importance of responsibility and hard work.
- Spends time helping Marie find help through the city government or another community resource.
- Hires Esther to clean her house, thereby providing her the money she needs, and on their break begins to help her with her budget, making sure she listens and understands Esther's obstacles to good financial management.

5C: Let's **hear** some of your reflections about Esther and Marie's relationship in terms of god complexes and marred identities.

Real gospel transformation occurs when those who have more lay down their god-complexes, recognizing their own weaknesses so they can see Jesus' strength, and those who have less lay down their marred identities, recognizing their gifts, abilities, and strengths as made in God's image. This happens when:

MATERIALLY WEALTHY...	MATERIALLY POOR...
The materially wealthy open themselves to the hospitality of the poor and look for ways to receive from them.	The materially poor are able to contribute using their gifts, abilities, talents, and even material possessions.
The materially wealthy ask questions that empower the poor to form their own answers, and to name their own gifts and abilities.	The materially poor are able to dream about how to use their God-given skills and abilities to solve problems, provide for their families and contribute to their communities.
The materially wealthy are open about their own challenges, brokenness, and sin.	The materially poor speak from the wisdom they have through education and experience, and name times when they used God's gifts to them to succeed.

(Rhodes, 2013)

From this perspective, you can see how people of widely varying incomes actually need each other. Everyone, regardless of socioeconomic situation, experiences broken relationships and poverty apart from Christ. Both groups need one another to experience healing and the reconciliation of God!

5D: Thanks, everyone, for the great discussion. What are the major take-away points from this discussion? **Call them out** in the large group.

[Make sure the following points are drawn out:

- *We are all poor.*
- *Each of us is broken in our four key relationships.*
- *Relationships with others have potential to heal brokenness or increase it.]*

5E: Now, **reflect** a few moments in silence on this question: What are ways that your own god complex or marred identity has kept you from seeing God's grace?

5F: Choose one of the boxes from the chart above and think about a situation or relationship in your life where you could apply it. **Circle** the box, **make** notes, and **turn** to a partner to **describe** your commitment to act.

After 3 minutes, we'll **hear** one or two ideas from those who would like to share.

[30 minute break]

SESSION 2

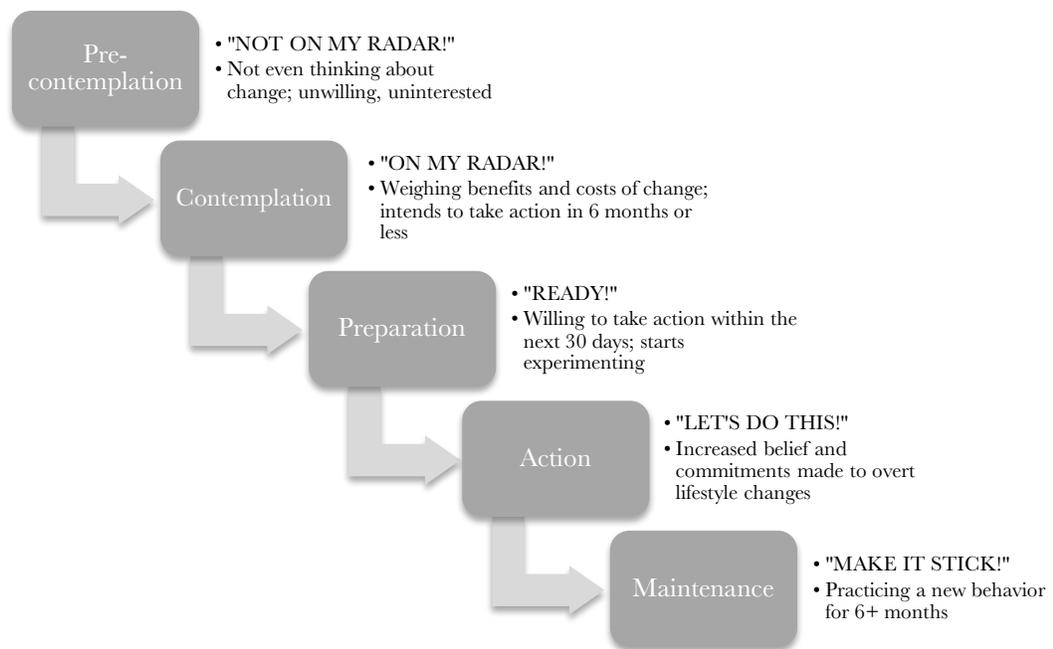
TASK 6

REFLECT ON AND NAME EXAMPLES OF THE STAGES OF CHANGE (20 MINUTES)

Now that we've started to examine the complexity of relationships across socioeconomic lines, one thing is clear: reconciliation and change are a *process*! And this process itself is valuable – sometimes the means are as necessary as the ends!

6A: To keep this in context, let's **examine** a framework in your notes called *Stages of Change*. This theory is based on principles developed from over 35 years of social science research, intervention development, and scores of empirical studies of people trying to break addictions or negative behaviors. Let's **rotate** around the room and have different volunteers **read** each step aloud.

STAGES OF CHANGE²



The research on these stages of change shows that while the time a person can stay in each stage is variable, the tasks required to move to the next stage are not, though they may occur in varying order.

² Derived from *Transtheoretical Model for Change*, 1992. Used by Permission.

Traditionally, behavior change such as quitting smoking, drinking, or overeating was often construed as an event. However, this model recognizes change as phenomena that unfold over time.

6B: To flesh this out, **think back** to the story of Esther and Marie. Let's **imagine** that one of Esther's barriers is that she can't quit smoking – no matter how much she needs the money for other things. With a partner, **examine** each stage and **create** a phrase that might depict Esther's attitudes/feelings with her smoking problem during that stage.

Thanks for your thoughts here. The research on stages of change we just mentioned found that a minority (usually less than 20%) of a population at risk was prepared to take action at any given time. This means that action-oriented guidance we may be tempted to dish out can actually mis-serve individuals in the early stages – we might be failing to ask the right questions or speak to them where they are.

6C: Because learning is not just for low-income participants, and we are all in process, **envision** a habit or behavior that you need to change in your own personal life. Take 3 minutes to **self-reflect**: where are you in the stages of change?

You won't be asked to share this aloud, but after 3 minutes, anyone who would like to share his or her thoughts is welcome.

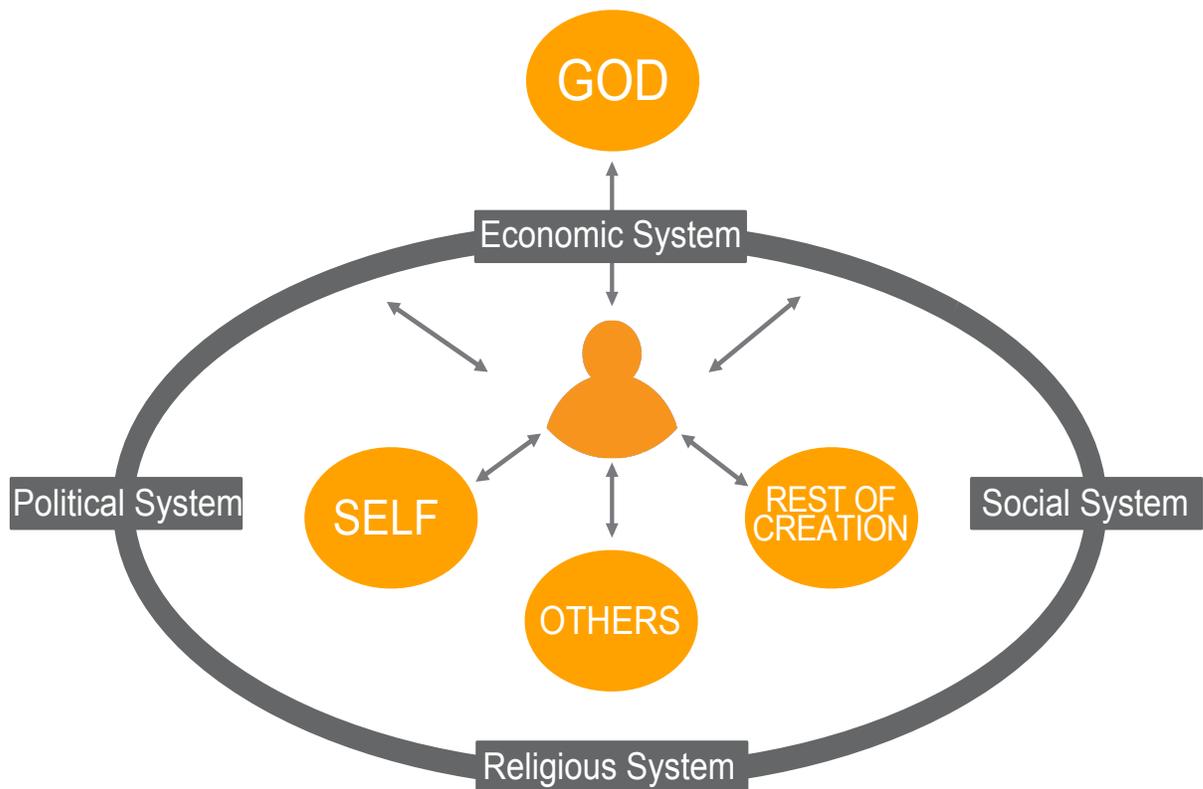
TASK 7

DESCRIBE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO POVERTY (10 MINUTES)

This has been great discussion. The factors that make up poverty are complex—another reason an ally needs plenty of support and wisdom to effectively walk alongside participants. Let's take another look at the causes of poverty from the perspective of systems.

7A: Flip back to the diagram from *When Helping Hurts* on the 4 Relationships. **Recall** how the Fall messed up all 4 relationships. In addition to an *individuals'* broken relationship with God, self, others, and creation, sin has also corrupted the *systems* that we all live in.

7B: Take a moment to **draw** a bubble around the diagram, demonstrating broken religious, political, social, and economic systems that contribute to poverty and injustice. None of us live in an individual vacuum; we all operate within these systems – whether they function well for us or not.



7C: Now, on your own, take 2 minutes to **examine** the research in your notes from Charles Shipler’s *The Working Poor* (2004)³. **Note** the spectrum of causes of poverty—from the level of individual behavior to the larger systemic level.

After 2 minutes, we’ll **hear** some of your insights.

³ Derived from *Using the Hidden Rules of Class to Create Sustainable Communities*, 2004. Used by permission.

CAUSES OF POVERTY

1. BEHAVIORS OF THE INDIVIDUAL	
Definition: Choices, behaviors, characteristics, and habits of people in poverty.	
Sample Issues:	
Dependence of welfare	Racism and discrimination
Morality	Low commitment to achievement
Crime	Spending habits
Single parenthood	Addiction, mental illness, domestic violence
Breakup of families	Planning skills
Intergenerational character traits	Orientation to the future
Work ethic	
2. HUMAN AND SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE COMMUNITY	
Definition: Resources available to individuals, communities, and businesses.	
Sample Issues:	
Intellectual capital	Childcare for working families
Social capital	Decline in neighborhoods
Availability of jobs	Decline in social morality
Availability of well-paying jobs	Urbanization
Racism and discrimination	Suburbanization of manufacturing
Availability and quality of education	Middle-class flight
Adequate skill sets	City and regional planning
3. EXPLOITATION	
Definition: How people in poverty are targeted because of their financial situation.	
Sample Issues:	
Racism and discrimination	Gambling
Cash-advance lenders	Temp work/Sweatshops
Sub-prime lenders	Internet scams
Lease purchase outlets	Drug/Sex trade
4. POLITICAL/ECONOMIC STRUCTURES	
Definition: Economic, political, and social policies at the international, national, state, and local levels.	
Sample Issues:	
Globalization	Taxation patterns
Corporate influence on legislators	Salary raise of CEO to line worker
Declining middle class	Immigration patterns
De-industrialization	Economic disparity/income segregation
Job loss	Racism and discrimination

7D: Share in the large group: What insights did you glean about the realities of the materially poor at these various levels? What new connections does this help you to make?

As discussed in *When Helping Hurts*, both individuals *and* systems are broken. Unfortunately, much of the conversation around causes of poverty tends to be polarizing, insisting that poverty is either a result of bad choices, or unjust structures. Rather than being an either/or proposition, the research shows that it is a

both/and reality. Poverty is about both the choices of the poor and the political/economic structures; furthermore, it is about everything in between. Poverty is caused by the choices of the poor, the lack of human and social capital, exploitation of the poor, and political/economic structures (DeVol). When walking with a low-income person, it becomes difficult to address one without the other.

TASK 8

EXAMINE CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AMONG DIFFERENT SOCIOECONOMIC GROUPS (20 MINUTES)

Besides encountering possible socioeconomic differences between allies and participants, we may also encounter differences in culture and the way we were raised and think about the world. Culture has a strong influence on financial decisions we make. We often take it for granted, but it has a huge impact on how we live, think, feel, and act.

8A: Examine this illustration of the *Cultural Iceberg*⁴ drawn on the flipchart. Culture is often compared to an iceberg that has both visible (on the surface) and invisible (below the surface) parts. Elements of culture that we can plainly see, such as food or clothes, are represented by the upper portion of the iceberg. Those elements that are not as obvious, such as why people talk or dress the way they do, are represented by the much larger portion of the iceberg underwater.

8B: To give an example of confusing or seemingly contradictory cultural practice that might occur in a low-income community, suppose a parent went out and bought new name brand shoes for their kid—even though he or she couldn't afford to pay their water bill. That is an example of an action. Let's **draw** a pair of shoes on the chart under *behaviors*.

In the large group, **name** some examples of an attitude that would accompany this action, and we'll **record** them on the chart.

[Give time for responses and write a few on the chart; i.e. the idea that having certain shoes is important for social standing.]

- What about a core value that underlies this action? *[i.e. belonging, respect, etc.]*

8C: Share aloud:

- What is one example of a confusing or seemingly contradictory financial behavior or practice in your culture?
- What attitudes lie underneath it?
- What core value makes it a common practice?

8D: Now, **form** pairs and **consider**:

⁴ Derived from *Language & Culture Worldwide, LLC*. www.LanguageAndCulture.com. All Rights Reserved.

- What is an example of a confusing or seemingly contradictory behavior or practice that is common in a socioeconomic class that is not as familiar to you?
- What attitudes do you think might explain it/be underneath it?
- What core value do you think makes it a common practice?

Come and **write** or **draw** your examples on the chart and we will **hear** about a few of them in the large group.

8E: Share:

- As allies, how might cultural differences between you and your participants help or harm your relationship?
- How might a clash of underlying priorities, life experience, and upbringing play out in your role as allies (think back to Esther and Marie’s relationship)?

Let’s **hear** some of your reflections in the large group.

TASK 9

PRAY FOR RELIANCE ON THE GRACE OF GOD AS WE BEGIN BUILDING THESE IMPORTANT SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS (10 MINUTES)

We’ve discussed a lot of ideas today and I appreciate your openness. As we have been discussing, the ally-participant relationship is just one part of a long process of transformation in the lives of participants—and ourselves! It is important as an ally to recognize that while this relationship is meant to be one in which both members flourish and learn from one another, it is also a relationship—like any other—in which rapport will grow over time. Even after training and being prepared, one person will not necessarily “fix” the other’s problems or even bring them closer to Christ.

9A: Read along in your notes or **listen** carefully as a volunteer reads a short article entitled “The Big Results are Not in Your Hand” by Thomas Merton.

THE BIG RESULTS ARE NOT IN YOUR HAND

Words of advice to faith-inspired activists; from Thomas Merton

Do not depend on the hope of results. When you are doing the sort of work you have taken on, essentially an apostolic work, you may have to face the fact that your work will be apparently worthless and even achieve no result at all, if not perhaps results opposite to what you expect.

As you get used to this idea, you start more and more to concentrate not on the results but on the value, the

rightness, the truth of the work itself. And there too a great deal has to be gone through, as gradually you struggle less and less for an idea and more and more for specific people. The range tends to narrow down, but it gets much more real. In the end, it is the reality of personal relationships that saves everything.

It is so easy to get engrossed with ideas and slogans and myths that in the end one is left holding the bag, empty, with no trace of meaning left in it. And then the temptation is to yell louder than ever in order to make the meaning be there again by magic. Going through this kind of reaction helps you to guard against this. Your system is complaining of too much verbalizing, and it is right...

The big results are not in your hands or mine, but they suddenly happen, and we can share in them; but there is no point in building our lives on this personal satisfaction, which may be denied us and which after all is not that important.

The next step in the process is for you to see that your own thinking about what you are doing is crucially important. You are probably striving to build yourself an identity in your work, out of your work and your witness. You are using it, so to speak, to protect yourself against nothingness, annihilation. That is not the right use of your work.

All the good that you do will come not from you but from the fact that you have allowed yourself, in the obedience of faith, to be used for God's love. Think of this more and gradually you will be free from the need to prove yourself, and you can be more open to the power that will work through you without your knowing it.

The great thing after all is to live, not to pour out your life in the service of a myth: and we turn the best things into myths. If you can get free from the domination of causes and just serve Christ's truth, you will be able to do more and will be less crushed by the inevitable disappointments. Because I see nothing whatever in sight but much disappointment, frustration, and confusion.

Our real hope...is not in something we think we can do, but in God who is making something good out of it in some way we cannot see. If we can do His will, we will be helping in this process. But we will not necessarily know all about it beforehand...

— *Thomas Merton, in a letter (dated February 21, 1966) to a friend*

- What does Merton say that you can relate to in your previous ministry experience in your church, work, or community?
- How might Merton's reflections about results and causes apply to your relationships and roles as allies?

9B: Break off into pairs and **share** a commitment you will make to take one small action step toward becoming a good ally—regular prayer to see yourself as mutually broken with people who are poor, exploring further resources on mentoring adults, or any other action step. **Write it down** in the box in your notes.

To serve well as an ally, I will take the following action step:

Christ is the one reconciling all things—we are not. We can relax in the process. You won't fix yourself or anyone else through being an ally, but you can be an agent of Christ's work in and through his people.

9C: Back in the large group, let's have a few people **close** our time together in prayer, leaving it all in God's hands to accomplish His work in and through us as He leads.

Thank you all so much for your participation in this training! It has been a joy to see your eagerness to see reconciled relationships in your communities! In order to help us improve this training so that we can better serve more people like you, please take a few minutes to **fill out** the short evaluation in the back of your notes and return them to me.

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EQUIPPING ALLIES TRAINING NOTES

ALLY TRAINING NOTES

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, we will have:

1. **Introduced** ourselves by **describing** good and bad experiences with a mentor;
2. **Considered** how definitions of poverty can be informed by the four key relationships;
3. **Named** ways low-income people typically experience brokenness in the four key relationships and **connected** this to the concept of marred identity;
4. **Named** ways that members of middle/upper classes typically experience brokenness in the four key relationships and **connected** this to the concept of god complexes;
5. **Examined** implications through a case study on god complexes and marred identities and **committed** to applying new knowledge;
6. **Reflected** on and **named** examples of the stages of change;
7. **Described** internal and external factors contributing to poverty;
8. **Examine** cultural differences among socioeconomic groups; and
9. **Prayed** for reliance on the grace of God as we begin building relationships.

INTRODUCTION

Thank you all for your interest in becoming an ally! Our purpose today is to equip you very practically with knowledge, skills, and attitudes to walk alongside low-income people in our benevolence ministry. We want to do that by:

- Examining some of our underlying assumptions about the causes of and solutions to poverty; and
- Considering the hidden dynamics of relationships across cultural and socioeconomic lines.

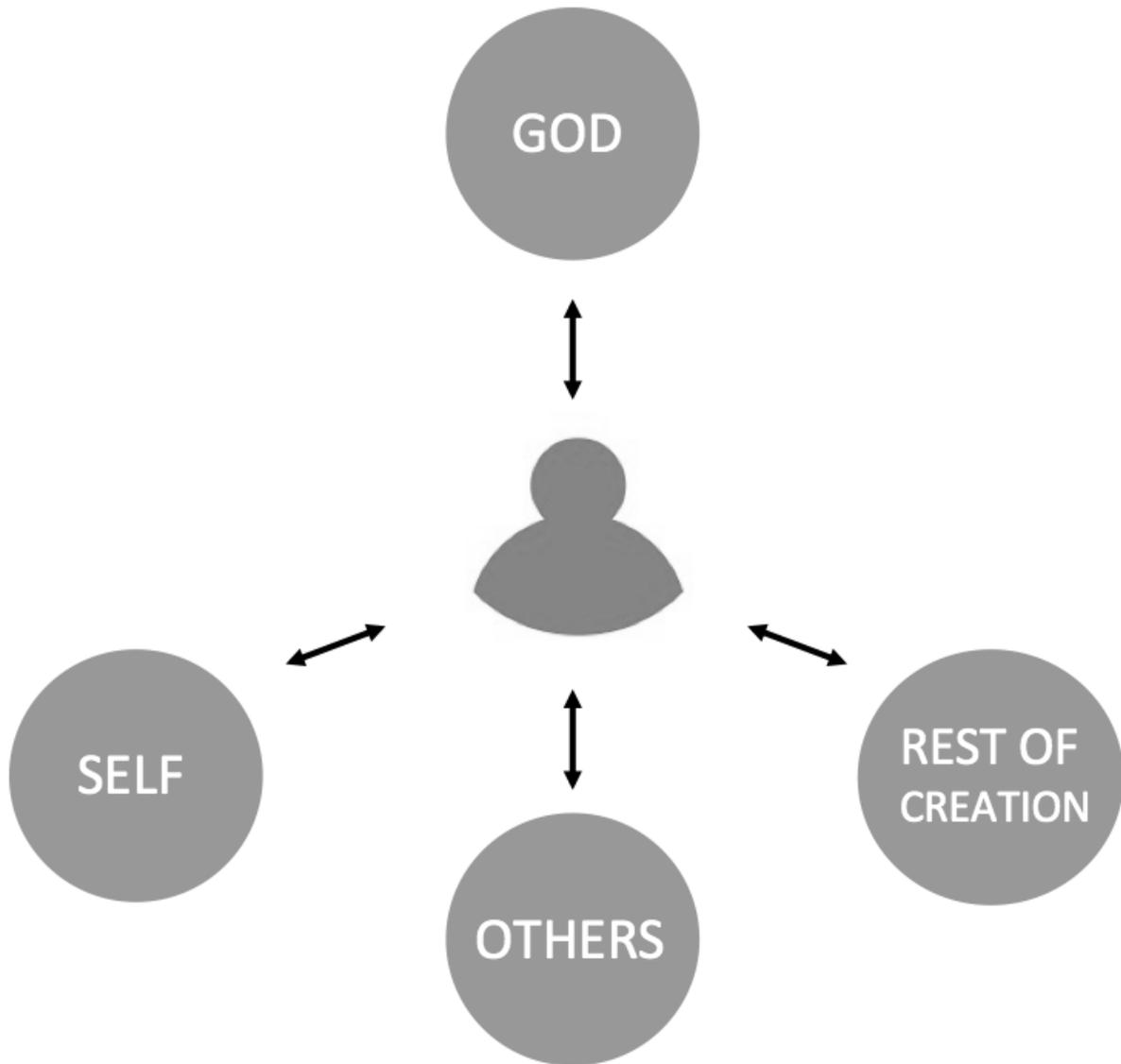
Notes:

TASK 2

FOUR KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Examine the diagram of the “Four Key Relationships” shown below. These relationships are where we can most clearly see the brokenness of sin, but also the redemption of Christ.

FOUR KEY RELATIONSHIPS⁵



The book *When Helping Hurts* describes these four key relationships, which are summarized in the following box.

⁵ Derived from *When Helping Hurts*, 2012.

FOUR KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Relationship with God – This is our primary relationship; the other three relationships flow out of this one. We were made to serve and give praise to our Creator through our thoughts, words, and actions. When we do this, we experience the presence of God as our Father and live in a joyful, intimate relationship with Him as His children.

Relationship with Self – People are uniquely created in the image of God and thus have inherent worth and value. While we must remember that we are not God, we have the high calling of reflecting God’s being, making us superior to the rest of creation and esteeming us with God-given dignity.

Relationship with Others – God created us to live in loving relationship with one another. We are not islands! We are made to know one another, to love one another, and to encourage one another in a supportive community to use the gifts God has given to each of us to fulfill our callings.

Relationship with the Rest of Creation – God created us to be stewards, people who understand, protect, subdue, and manage the world that God has created in order to preserve it and to produce bounty. Note that while God made the world perfect, he left it incomplete. This means that while the world was created to be without defect, God called humans to interact with creation, to make possibilities into realities, and to sustain ourselves through the fruits of our stewardship.

(Corbett and Fikkert, 2009)

TASK 3

NAME WHEN DIVERSE WAYS OF BROKENNESS COLLIDE

The potential to actually exacerbate brokenness on both sides is particularly high in relationships between these groups. This happens when, for instance:

THOSE WHO HAVE MORE...	THOSE WHO HAVE LESS...
Those who have more give material hand-outs and are solidified in their identity as the “haves”	Those who have less ask and receive material hand-outs and are solidified as the “have-nots”
Those who have more plan and give instructions and advice and are solidified in their identity as the ones with answers and who have it all together	Those who have less follow instructions and receive advice and are solidified in their identity as the ones who need help and don’t have ideas
Those who have more speak about the lessons they’ve learned through their successes, and are solidified in their identity as the successful, blessed	Those who have less speak about their failures and are solidified in their identity as the needy, incompetent failures

(Rhodes, 2013)

TASK 4

EXAMINE A CASE STUDY

Read the following case study about an ally and participant. Think about what will happen in terms of the four key relationships, god complexes, and marred identities.

ESTHER AND MARIE

Esther grew up in the community of Eastside Park. She dropped out of high school at age 14 after her father, who regularly abused her mother, was killed in a gang conflict. Esther has worked three jobs in her life, two at fast food restaurants, and all for less than 3 months. She now works the early shift at Waffle House for tips and no benefits. Today was a typical day for Esther. She dragged herself out of bed at 5 am, awoke her 8 and 5 year old children, and walked them to the bus stop before catching her own bus to work. One hour and three transfers later, she arrived already weary. After getting cut early, Esther picked up her 5 year old from school, then stopped by the grocery store for food and cigarettes with the \$9 she earned in tips that day. With no bus fare left, she walked home, lugging the grocery bag and cranky 5 year old by the arm. After settling in at home, the kids stayed home alone and ate cereal for dinner so Esther could get to the laundromat to do three loads. She got back in time to tuck them in by 9 pm, then passed out in bed herself shortly after.

Marie comes from an upper middle class family, and went to Vanderbilt for her undergrad and Rhodes for her MBA. She's a successful business owner, and a women's ministry leader at her large middle-class church. Marie is meticulous about managing her finances, and works over 60 hours a week managing the graphic design firm that she and her husband started 15 years ago. She has recently heard the call to help the poor in her community, but really, she doesn't know any low-income people personally until she meets Esther through the financial education program. The first time she visits Esther in Eastside Park, she can't believe anybody in her city lives in such conditions. Later that night, Marie is shaken up. "I don't even know how she survives," she tells her husband with tears in her eyes. She looks out the window into her historic neighborhood's newly renovated park, thinking about the stark contrast between their worlds.

Both Esther and Marie attend Christ Community Church downtown. Recently, Esther came to Marie, her ally, asking for help paying the electric bill. This time of year has been tough with the holidays, paying bills, buying winter clothes, and affording presents for the kids, especially when losing shifts at the Waffle House. Marie thought about her own Christmas holiday with her family, about the trip they had made to California to see her parents and the presents she and her husband were able to buy their kids this year. All in all, it had been a great holiday; the only real stress had been being too busy. Esther's Christmas was so different from hers, and this made Marie feel guilty. She has the power to help Esther...how can she refuse? After all, Esther is living in a dangerous, low-rent apartment, and she has little money to feed her 2 kids. When Esther called, in tears, asking Marie for \$30, Marie drove over to Eastside Park. She agreed to pay her electric bill. Obviously, Esther cannot pay the bill herself. Marie locked the car doors as she drove away from Esther's apartment. She felt good about being able to help her – almost heroic. There's something really great about being involved, getting to know someone, and being able to step in and lift them out of their troubles. Marie was eager to keep pressing on in her relationship with Esther, because it made her feel significant.

But, later that evening, Marie's high seemed to wear off, and she found herself feeling sorry and irritated at Esther's situation – her Christmas, her job, her children. She started to think about all the times the deacons at church helped her with bills in the past year. Why aren't things getting better? When she went to ask her church about this and look through the records, she realized that individuals, or the church, had paid nine bills for Esther in the past twelve months. Goodness! Marie thought. She felt frustrated that after one year of helping Esther, even after participating in the financial education class together, it seems like nothing much has really changed in her life. She's still working bad shifts at Waffle House, and she still barely pays her bills every month.

In your small groups, consider each of the following actions. For each one, what will happen in terms of the four key relationships, god complexes, and marred identity if Marie...

- Continues to offer Esther money for help with bills, but only essentials like the electric bill – not with snacks or cigarettes.
- Refuses to have any financial connection with her, but will have her over for regular meals and discussions on the importance of responsibility and hard work.
- Spends time helping Marie find help through the city government or another community resource.
- Hires Esther to clean her house, thereby providing her the money she needs, and on their break begins to help her with her budget, making sure she listens and understands Esther’s obstacles to good financial management.

Notes:

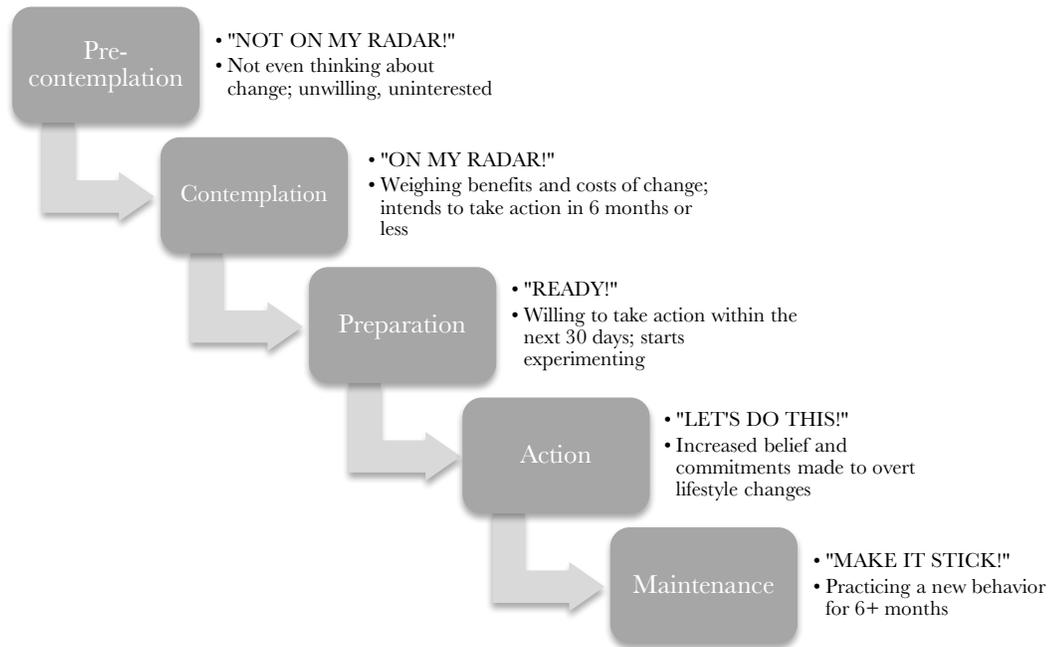
Real gospel transformation occurs when those who have more lay down their god-complexes, recognizing their own weaknesses so they can see Jesus’ strength, and those who have less lay down their marred identities, recognizing their gifts, abilities, and strengths as made in God’s image. This happens when:

MATERIALLY WEALTHY...	MATERIALLY POOR...
The materially wealthy open themselves to the hospitality of the poor and look for ways to receive from them.	The materially poor are able to contribute using their gifts, abilities, talents, and even material possessions.
The materially wealthy ask questions that empower the poor to form their own answers, and to name their own gifts and abilities.	The materially poor are able to dream about how to use their God-given skills and abilities to solve problems, provide for their families and contribute to their communities.
The materially wealthy are open about their own challenges, brokenness, and sin.	The materially poor speak from the wisdom they have through education and experience, and name times when they used God’s gifts to them to succeed.

(Rhodes, 2013)

TASK 6

STAGES OF CHANGE⁶



Notes:

⁶ Derived from *Transtheoretical Model for Change*, 1992. Used by Permission.

CAUSES OF POVERTY

1. BEHAVIORS OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Definition: Choices, behaviors, characteristics, and habits of people in poverty.

Sample Issues:

Dependence of welfare	Racism and discrimination
Morality	Low commitment to achievement
Crime	Spending habits
Single parenthood	Addiction, mental illness, domestic violence
Breakup of families	Planning skills
Intergenerational character traits	Orientation to the future
Work ethic	

2. HUMAN AND SOCIAL CAPITAL IN THE COMMUNITY

Definition: Resources available to individuals, communities, and businesses.

Sample Issues:

Intellectual capital	Childcare for working families
Social capital	Decline in neighborhoods
Availability of jobs	Decline in social morality
Availability of well-paying jobs	Urbanization
Racism and discrimination	Suburbanization of manufacturing
Availability and quality of education	Middle-class flight
Adequate skill sets	City and regional planning

3. EXPLOITATION

Definition: How people in poverty are targeted because of their financial situation.

Sample Issues:

Racism and discrimination	Gambling
Cash-advance lenders	Temp work/Sweatshops
Sub-prime lenders	Internet scams
Lease purchase outlets	Drug/Sex trade

4. POLITICAL/ECONOMIC STRUCTURES

Definition: Economic, political, and social policies at the international, national, state, and local levels.

Sample Issues:

Globalization	Taxation patterns
Corporate influence on legislators	Salary raise of CEO to line worker
Declining middle class	Immigration patterns
De-industrialization	Economic disparity/income segregation
Job loss	Racism and discrimination

⁷ Derived from *Using the Hidden Rules of Class to Create Sustainable Communities*, 2004.

Even after training and being prepared, one person will not necessarily fix the other's problems or even bring them closer to Christ. Consider the following article entitled "The Big Results are Not in Your Hand," by Thomas Merton.

THE BIG RESULTS ARE NOT IN YOUR HAND

Words of advice to faith-inspired activists; from Thomas Merton

Do not depend on the hope of results. When you are doing the sort of work you have taken on, essentially an apostolic work, you may have to face the fact that your work will be apparently worthless and even achieve no result at all, if not perhaps results opposite to what you expect.

As you get used to this idea, you start more and more to concentrate not on the results but on the value, the rightness, the truth of the work itself. And there too a great deal has to be gone through, as gradually you struggle less and less for an idea and more and more for specific people. The range tends to narrow down, but it gets much more real. In the end, it is the reality of personal relationships that saves everything.

You are fed up with words, and I don't blame you. I am nauseated by them sometimes. I am also, to tell the truth, nauseated by ideals and with causes. This sounds like heresy, but I think you will understand what I mean.

It is so easy to get engrossed with ideas and slogans and myths that in the end one is left holding the bag, empty, with no trace of meaning left in it. And then the temptation is to yell louder than ever in order to make the meaning be there again by magic. Going through this kind of reaction helps you to guard against this. Your system is complaining of too much verbalizing, and it is right...

The big results are not in your hands or mine, but they suddenly happen, and we can share in them; but there is no point in building our lives on this personal satisfaction, which may be denied us and which after all is not that important.

The next step in the process is for you to see that your own thinking about what you are doing is crucially important. You are probably striving to build yourself an identity in your work, out of your work and your witness. You are using it, so to speak, to protect yourself against nothingness, annihilation. That is not the right use of your work.

All the good that you do will come not from you but from the fact that you have allowed yourself, in the obedience of faith, to be used for God's love. Think of this more and gradually you will be free from the need to prove yourself, and you can be more open to the power that will work through you without your knowing it.

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Our real hope...is not in something we think we can do, but in God who is making something good out of it in some way we cannot see. If we can do His will, we will be helping in this process. But we will not necessarily know all about it beforehand...

— *Thomas Merton, in a letter (dated February 21, 1966) to a friend*

In the box below, write down one step you commit to take toward becoming a good ally.

To serve well as an ally, I will take the following action step:

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- Bennett, Arthur. G. (Ed). *Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions*. Banner of Truth, 2003.
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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR ALLIES

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COURSE EVALUATION

Please take some time to complete the following questions so that we can serve people like you better in the future.

1. The teaching style and methods used for this course were: _____

1=Very poor, 2=Poor, 3=Average, 4=Good, 5=Very Good

2. The written material and handouts were: _____

1=Very poor, 2=Poor, 3=Average, 4=Good, 5=Very Good

3. Describe two ways this training prepared you to be a successful ally.

4. Describe two suggestions you have to help us improve the training.

NOTES