Heart-felt singing, prayer, laughter, tears and hugs punctuate the meetings at the local church in Voronezh, the capital city of the Central Federal District of Russia. Inside the church, 16 women together go deep into God’s word. Ten are students; the others are teachers and visitors. They’re from different towns and denominations, varied faith backgrounds, educational levels, life situations. What they share is a hunger for God’s word and a calling to serve the Lord by serving other women in the context of the Russian church.

It’s a Women-to-Women Leadership Training seminar. Entrust currently has 50 women’s training centers across Russia; Voronezh is just one of them. Over 800 women are being transformed by God through these centers; Ludmila Shkurina is one of them.

In 1995 Jesus so transformed Ludmila’s life that she gave up a high-paying job at a water plant to serve with a ministry to orphans. She became an Entrust student in 2003 in order to grow in biblical knowledge and practical ministry skills alongside other Russian women. This weekend, Ludmila and her fellow students go over their homework, share testimonies and take part in seminars led by Russian women who have finished their Entrust courses and now are equipping this next generation of women. The Entrust training here has been completely indigenized; local women now own a reproducible leadership training process.

Topics include what the Bible says about the heart, the mind and the will; forgiveness; and sharpening ministry skills. One of the assignments prior to this weekend had been to plot one’s “life story.” As they work through the lesson together, the ladies discover the value of honestly evaluating their own lives and spiritual progress before entering into ministry with women who might open their hearts to them and to the Holy Spirit. Surprisingly, Ludmila and the other teachers of this new generation realize that the course on “The Christian Life” became even more interesting and useful than when they were learning it in a local training center as students. After two days, the women go their separate ways to implement what they’ve learned. Soon, many will graduate and possibly launch new women’s training centers in their own towns and cities.

“Before this training I was like a little girl who did not even know the alphabet, but who very much wanted to teach others to read.”

Svetlana B., Nizhny Novgorod, Russia