

# Sample Sermon Outline: A Call to HOPE

## Hello Pastor and Welcome to Compassion Sunday!

*The sermon outline below is meant to help you in communicating the beautiful and joyful biblical mandate to serve those struggling in poverty. Please feel free to change, take out or add whatever you'd like, as well as include your own personal stories, illustrations or more Scripture passages. We hope this serves as a good framework and saves you some valuable preparation time!*

## The Calling to Care

Share a story of a time in your life when someone helped you.

This could be lighthearted, funny or a more serious situation.

- As human beings created in the image of God, it is baked into our DNA to help and care for people in need. This is especially true for those of us who know the Lord and call God our Father. His heart breaks to see his children broken and hurting, and we can't help but for our hearts to break as well.
- If you've ever seen extreme poverty up close, you know that it is evil. It's an evil that undermines the abundance God instilled in creation for all living things and robs people of dignity, quality of life and sometimes their very lives.

Perhaps insert a story here of any personal experience you may have with witnessing extreme poverty.

- **WHO are the poor? Those Jesus called “the least of these” (Matthew 25:40).** Those without enough: not enough food, water, medicine, shelter, education, family or community. They look like vulnerable children, orphans, widows, prisoners, the homeless, refugees, children forced into prostitution or slave labor, the abused, the exploited — those with no power to provide for or protect themselves.
- It can be difficult to look the monster of poverty in the face. It's tempting to turn away, to ignore it. But I have good news! The Lord does not desire to shame or guilt us, but to EMPOWER us! Today we will walk out of this gathering knowing we are called and equipped to make a difference in the darkest places in this world — even in places where many dare not look. We will also discover that our own lives are transformed in the most beautiful ways when we do.

- As children of God we have his nature in us, and that means we all have at our disposal an incredible power called **COMPASSION**.
- You might feel powerless against poverty. There may be a hundred different reasons you would say, “I can’t.” But I want you to know — **with compassion you can!** Compassion in you, fueled by the Holy Spirit, will give you the desire, the courage, the strength and the perseverance to sacrificially serve the poor.

## Why We Serve the Poor?

We’ll talk more about the power of compassion in a bit but first let’s take a look at some of the compelling reasons why we should LOVE to love and serve the poor.

- 1** | **It’s the right (righteous) thing to do.** As I’ve said, because we are created in God’s image, it’s in our DNA to help others. We know this. And doing what is right creates a great sense of purpose and joy in us.
- 2** | **It’s a way of spreading the good news.** As the Church, the Body of Christ, our love and service to the poor are a light to the world. In John 13:35, Jesus says, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” Surely the selfless act of giving to those in need is the kind of “love for one another” that causes the world to realize there is a different, deeper love available to them as well. This looks like Jesus!
- 3** | **Doing to others as you would have them do to you is a command (Luke 6:31).** This verse takes on a whole new meaning if you imagine yourself living in extreme poverty with no ability to change your situation on your own. Wouldn’t any of us long for help from those with the power to do so?
- 4** | **If you want to know God better, love the poor!** This is a BIG one! Knowing God is the absolute greatest gift and honor any human being could have!

### Let’s take a look at Scripture to unpack this idea:

- » **Loving the vulnerable is pleasing to God (James 1:27).** When we want to know someone, we find out what pleases them and we do it.
- » **We grow closer to God by doing what he does (Jeremiah 22:16, Psalms 68:5).** Simply put, this is discipleship: to do what he does. And he wants to do this (bless the broken) with us alongside him!

*Q: Regarding Psalms 68:5, where is God’s holy dwelling? A: Inside of US! (1 Corinthians 6:19).*

- » **When we serve “the least of these” we are directly serving Jesus (Matthew 25:34-40).** This one seems too good to be true! If we could truly take these words of Jesus to heart, no one would ever need to ask us to help the poor, because we would be searching out opportunities! Think of it like this: If you knew Jesus needed help, would you help him? Of course you would! Well, he says we are helping him when we serve someone who is suffering.

**It's more important now than ever.** Over the past year, people living in poverty have been disproportionately affected by the economic crisis brought on by COVID-19. More people have been pushed into poverty. More people are facing food insecurity. More people are losing hope. Serving the poor is truly more vital now than ever before.

## Dying to Self

The biggest challenge we have to face in serving the poor will not be the devil or our finances but SELF. As in — ourselves, selfishness, self-obsession, self-gratification, or simply too much self-focus.

Loving the poor can be a challenge for us Americans because, like it or not, we live in a “consumer culture” geared toward getting us to focus mostly on one person: ourselves.

Here, you might reference a particular advertisement, American discretionary spending habits, average credit card debt, a Black Friday YouTube video, our obsession with celebrities, hoarding food, toilet paper and sanitation goods at the beginning of the pandemic, etc., whatever will connect best with your congregation.

- **We have to rage against this mindset!** Being overly self-focused is a disease. Self-focus is a TRAP and a TRICK. It never can produce happiness because it is sin. Sin can only lead to death.
- Could it be that the reason so many Americans today (including many Christians) are stressed, anxious and generally unhappy is that we have swallowed the lie of consumerism — which has caused us to have to run faster and harder to keep up with the ever-increasing standard of living — the so-called “good life” — something that has in many ways been stripped from us this past year?
- However, isn't it interesting that our Savior whom we “follow” did not teach self-gratification but SELF-DENIAL? Jesus said it clearly in Luke 9:23.
- And it's not just a recommendation but rather a requirement to be his disciple. Which begs the question, “If I live a self-focused life, am I truly a disciple of Jesus Christ?” And he doesn't require this because he wants us to be miserable. Quite the opposite! It's because his way leads to TRUE LIFE AND JOY that doesn't change with the culture and can never be taken away from us, even in death!

## A Call to Hope

The most beautiful thing in all of this is that when we die to ourselves and care for the poor, we actually FIND OURSELVES. When we share the good news and hope of Christ with others, we find hope for ourselves in return.

- Isaiah 58:10 says, “If you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.”
- When we give of ourselves, our time and our finances on behalf of those in need, light rises. The light of Christ, the hope of Christ shines in and through us in profound ways.

- This way of living — “spending ourselves” and having compassion — is the ANTIDOTE to the disease of self-focus! And as we live this way, we draw closer to God, as we continually pray, “Lord break my heart for what breaks yours.”

We have a unique opportunity to live this message out. Today is Compassion Sunday, a day set apart to speak up on behalf of precious children living in poverty. But I want us to do more than just speak, I want us to act.

So today, I'd like to invite you to answer a call to give hope to a child living in poverty. Will you prayerfully consider sponsoring a child with Compassion International today?

Every boy and girl on the planet — every child trapped in poverty — deserves the opportunity to hope.

To sponsor a child today, visit the sponsorship table in the atrium. There you'll find a bunch of packets, each with a photo and information about a precious child living in poverty. If you're moved to sponsor one of those children, all you have to do is grab a packet, fill out the attached form, and hand it to someone standing behind the table. Bringing hope to a child is as simple as that!

When you choose to sponsor, you are providing that child with a lifeline to the local church and helping to provide nutritious food, medical care, tutoring and the opportunity to hear the gospel message. Will you consider sacrificing some of your finances to let a child know they are seen, known and loved? Both by God and by you. Will you answer call to hope today? I guarantee you will experience an overwhelming feeling of purpose as you live your faith out in such a tangible way.

*(Close in prayer.)*