



SAMPLE SERMON OUTLINE

Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

1 JOHN 3:18, NIV

Hello Pastor and welcome to Compassion Sunday!

The sermon outline below is meant to help you communicate the beautiful and joyful biblical mandate to serve those 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 it robs people of dignity, quality of life and sometimes their very lives. (Perhaps insert a story here of any personal experience you've had with witnessing extreme poverty.)
- Children are the hardest hit by poverty's effects but the least able to do anything about their circumstances. They are the most vulnerable, the most impacted by malnutrition and often the earliest to succumb to disease.
- Children living in poverty lack critical resources. They lack enough food, water, medicine, shelter, education, family or community.

- It can be difficult to look the monster of poverty in the face. It's tempting to turn away, to ignore it. But 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. That means we all have at our disposal an incredible power called COMPASSION.

- But maybe you're wondering how you can make a difference. Maybe you're asking ... What's the best way to tackle something as vast as hunger and global poverty? And what can I really do about it? You might feel powerless against poverty. 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 Children?

We'll talk more about the power of compassion in a bit. But first, let's take a closer look at children — and why they hold such significance in the fight against poverty. After all, children don't have a lot of money or political power or social standing. They aren't (yet) world leaders, doctors or respected economists. So in fighting the enormous, complex task of global poverty, why did we choose to tackle it from the most vulnerable, least influential, most soft-spoken voice?

Here are five reasons why we should put our time and resources into children.

1. They matter to Jesus.

There are many stories in Scripture about how precious children are to Jesus. Mark 10:13-15 shares of a time when people brought little children to Jesus for him to touch them. Thinking Jesus wouldn't want to bother with children, the disciples rebuked them — but they were wrong. We read in verses 14-15, "When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder such as these. I tell you the truth; anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.'"

2. They are the most receptive to the Gospel.

We read in Proverbs 22:6, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." Research shows that almost two-thirds of Americans who give their lives to Christ do so before the age of 18. Still other global studies suggest that children are most receptive to spiritual and developmental input between the ages of 4 and 14.

3. There are a lot of them.

According to the CIA's World Factbook, over 40% of the global population is under the age of 25. About 85% of the world's youth live in low-income countries. The sheer number of children around the world — and the number of those living in poverty — is staggering. An estimated 385 million children currently live in extreme poverty (less than US \$1.90/day), and one in two — or 689 million — live in multi-dimensionally poor households.

4. They are the hardest hit by poverty's effects but the least able to do anything about their circumstances.

When it comes to the effects of poverty, children are the most vulnerable. They are the most impacted by malnutrition. They are often the earliest to succumb to disease. In times of war or instability, it's children who suffer the most. And it's the youngest who are the worst off. Over 20% of all children under age 5 in the developing world live in extremely poor households, compared with 15% of 15- to 17-year-olds.

5. They have a lifetime ahead of them.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of working with children is the incredible potential for life-long change. In speaking about his book *Too Small to Ignore*, President Emeritus of Compassion International Dr. Wess Stafford shared, "When a child is small it takes very little effort to make an impact for good, or (one) that can destroy them. A child's life can be launched or derailed, and the effects will last a lifetime."

Okay. But How?

Now that we've discussed *why* we should focus on releasing children from poverty, let's get to the *how*.

One of the most potent weapons against poverty is helping a child see themselves as precious and valuable in the eyes of God. And when it's paired with nutritious food to combat hunger, tutoring, regular medical checkups and vocational training ... the result is a tangible and sustainable impact.

That's the difference you can make when you sponsor a child with Compassion International. You'll not only help meet their physical needs like food and health care. You'll also help connect them with the love and care of a local church in their community.

Compassion chooses to work exclusively through local churches that are equipped to embrace individual children, develop the value in every child, and break through the unique and individual barriers for each child to be released from poverty.

As this happens, children become agents of transformation — because changed circumstances might change a person, but a changed person will always change their circumstances.

That's why children in Compassion's program are more likely to stay in school, break the cycle of poverty in their families, become leaders in their communities and build tomorrow's church.

But changing the life of a child isn't something that can be passive. You'll have to step up and act, as we read in 1 John 3:17-18 ...

"If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."

And the thing is, when you choose to sponsor a child, it's not just for them. It's for you too. Because perhaps the most beautiful thing in all of this is that when we die to ourselves and care for the poor, we actually FIND

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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, our 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.”

With Actions and In Truth.

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. We already know how Jesus feels about these children. He calls them to himself. He says the Kingdom is for such as these.

We have the opportunity to answer the call of children living in poverty. But you’ll have to do more than just speak. You’ll have to act. You’ll get to live out the truth of the Gospel in a real and tangible way.

When you go to the sponsorship table, you’ll see the faces of children who are living in areas of extreme poverty. When you choose to sponsor, you are providing a lifeline to the local church and helping to provide nutritious food, medical care, tutoring and the opportunity to hear the gospel message.

So the decision is yours. Would you answer the call of caring for a child in poverty with actions and in truth? Would you prayerfully consider sponsoring a child with Compassion International today?

I guarantee you will experience an overwhelming feeling of purpose as you live your faith out in such a tangible way.

In Jesus’ name.

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