**The Mercy Journey: Email Campaign**

E1: Series Announcement [3–5 days prior to the start of the series]

*Tense. Divided. Broken. Unjust. Isolated. Hostile. Vitriolic. Anxious. Skeptical.*

Do these words ring true of your own experience today or call recent headlines to mind?

In our volatile cultural moment, it’s imperative that we, as followers of Christ, take up his mandate to be messengers of mercy to a hostile, hurting and broken world. We’re poised with a unique opportunity to rise above the noise and offer lasting hope and healing.

But before we can truly offer mercy to others, we must embrace it for ourselves. Mercy begins with an inward transformation, empowered by the Holy Spirit, as we acknowledge and receive the unmerited favor of God lavished on us through Jesus. When our hearts are changed by his mercy, we are emboldened to carry it into our homes, churches and communities.

To equip us to this end, I’m so excited to lead us on *The Mercy Journey*, a four-week series starting this Sunday. [[Our small groups will also be diving into *The Mercy Journey* together. Now is the perfect time to join one!]]

Inspired by brand-new data from research firm the Barna Group, *The Mercy Journey* will help us understand prevailing attitudes toward and expressions of mercy in the American church and in our culture at large. Convicted by God’s mandate to “love mercy” (Micah 6:8), we’ll take a fresh look at some of scripture’s most well-known and beloved stories of mercy, and be challenged to move toward others with compassion, forgiveness and kindness.

I hope you’ll join me this Sunday at [[SERVICE TIMES]] as we take our first step on the Mercy Journey.

[[PASTOR’S NAME/SIGNATURE]]

E2: Week 1 Recap / Week 2 Look Ahead

Mercy: *Compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom it is within one’s power to punish or harm [Oxford English Dictionary]*

A 2018 study by Barna Group found that *“…those who experience radical forgiveness have more willingness to forgive others. Among those who say they have received forgiveness, almost nine in 10 (87%) say they have given it in return (compared to 64 percent of those who have not received it)” [*The Mercy Journey*].*

Last week, we explored the radical forgiveness offered to us by God, through the perfect sacrifice of Christ. Like the merciful father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, God is ready to run toward us, arms open wide with mercy, when we turn to him. Imagine yourself receiving this greeting from the Almighty:

*“And while [the son] was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him” [Luke 15:20].*

When we have embraced such radical forgiveness in our hearts, we are empowered to offer radical forgiveness to those around us, even those who may have inflicted our deepest wounds. Often that’s the people closest to us, even our own families. That’s what we’ll be looking at this week as we continue on the Mercy Journey.

I can’t wait to see you Sunday.

[[PASTOR’S SIGNATURE]]

E3: Week 2 Recap / Week 3 Look Ahead

*“’Please, come closer,’ [Joseph] said to them. So they came closer. And he said again, ‘I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into slavery in Egypt. But don’t be upset, and don’t be angry with yourselves for selling me to this place. It was God who sent me here ahead of you to preserve your lives. This famine that has ravaged the land for two years will last five more years, and there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. God has sent me ahead of you to keep you and your families alive and to preserve many survivors’” [Genesis 45:4-7].*

The example of forgiveness and mercy displayed in Joseph’s life is astounding! To be sold into slavery, utterly abandoned and considered as good as dead by your brothers, then to experience years of imprisonment and injustice as a result of their wrongdoing, seems an unforgiveable offense. But in expressing his emotions, revealing his brothers’ wrongdoing and recognizing God’s greater purpose, Joseph was able to forgive his brothers and save his entire family from certain starvation.

This is the power of God on display, helping us radically forgive those who have wronged us. This grace permeates our homes and informs how we as Christ-followers respond to those in need of mercy around us.

Sadly, new data from Barna Group shows that Christians closely resemble the broader population when it comes to reporting feelings of compassion for those in distress, the poor, someone who has wronged them or someone who has committed a crime. How can we reverse this trend and, as a church community, set ourselves apart by our mercy-filled lives? How can we live in a way that shows we believe “mercy triumphs over judgement” (James 2:13)?

Join me this week on the Mercy Journey as we seek to answer these questions and become a mercy-filled church.

[[PASTOR’S SIGNATURE]]

E4: Week 3 Recap / Week 4 Look Ahead

*“The purpose of the gospel is restoring creation, taking the things that are falling apart and bringing them back together. Meeting psychological, social and physical needs. You’re not saved* by *doing that, but you are saved* to *do that” [*The Mercy Journey*].*

James didn’t mince words in his epistle to the early Church. His words are as convicting to us as they were to his first readers: *“Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you” [James 1:27].*

Our exhortation as the body of Christ is to be his hands and feet by caring for those overlooked, outcast and ignored by society. The broader theme of James and of scripture is this: those who bear the name of Christ should live out what they believe and look like him. It is not acceptable to receive the forgiveness and mercy of Jesus without demonstrating the same forgiveness and mercy to others.

To do that as a church, we must **listen** well, **obey** God’s Word, **care** for the lonely and abandoned, and **act** out our faith through love and service. I encourage you to dig into the book of James this week for continued instruction and admonition toward a merciful life.

This Sunday, we’ll be taking a final step—rather, a launching step—together on our mercy journey. We’ll visit perhaps the best-known parable in all of scripture and be challenged to take God’s mercy outside our walls and into the world around us. Don’t miss it!

See you Sunday,

[[PASTOR’S SIGNATURE]]

E5: Week 4 Recap / Challenge

*“’Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?’ Jesus asked. The man replied, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Then Jesus said, ‘Yes, now go and do the same’” [Luke 10:36-37].*

I have loved these past four weeks of being on the Mercy Journey together. I am confident that God has amazing opportunities in store for us, individually and as a collective body, to be messengers of his mercy to our community and the world. May we, like the Good Samaritan, **see** needs and have **compassion**, **go** to others and take **care** of their needs, count the **cost** and pay it, and show **commitment** to others’ complete healing.

If you’d like to deepen your experience with the Mercy Journey, I encourage you to explore these supplemental resources:

* Join a Mercy Journey Small Group [[if applicable]
* Join us for SERVE WEEK [[This would be a great spot to promote churchwide service activities if your church does something like this]]
* Commit to serve with one of our local partners [[Highlight partnerships with local nonprofits, schools and aid organizations]]
* Apply to serve on a volunteer team [[Highlight an area of your church that needs volunteers]]
* Walk through *The Mercy Journey* Workbooks for families and business leaders

I’m grateful to be a part of a family committed to honoring God with our lives and being messengers of his mercy to a hurting world.

On the journey with you,

[[PASTOR’S SIGNATURE]]