This discussion guide can be used to plan a session with adult and older youth participants from a single place of worship, from a single tradition, or with participants from many different religious and ethical traditions.

Moving Forward with Hope: Love and Justice for Every Child

It is designed as a 90-minute session. Adapt as appropriate for your group to reflect the traditions present, the number and age of participants, and the time available.
One person can serve as the facilitator for this session. However, if you are planning a multifaith discussion, it would be best if you could involve one leader from each tradition expected to be present to discuss the session in advance, make any desired adjustment to the program and materials, and share in the facilitation/leadership of the session. This will ensure not only that the session is appropriate for all present but also will support outreach in advance to build participation.

**Preparation:**

- **Get an Overview:** Read through the materials to familiarize yourself with the flow and content.

- **Prepare Handouts:** Make copies of the handouts for the anticipated number of participants (plus extras, or participants can share if necessary).
  - Make two-sided copies of Handouts 1 and 3 so each is just one sheet.
  - Handout 2 is “Moments in America.” Make the appropriate number of copies.
  - Handout 4 is six sides (three sheets if printed two-sided). If you want to reduce the amount of photocopying, you could handwrite the readings from Handout 4 on sheets of newsprint or poster board and display them on the walls of the room where you will be meeting.
  - Alternatively, you could plan to project all of the handout materials on a screen so all may read along.

- **Plan for Follow-Up Action:** Plan for the final segment to give participants the opportunity to learn more about and commit to active responses to care and seek justice for children and work to end child poverty. Identify action steps that participants can take in your community. If appropriate, invite local organizations, programs and agencies serving and seeking justice for children to provide materials, speakers or be present at tables following the discussion so participants can learn more and get involved. Consider having index cards available for participants to write their vision of a future of hope for children and their concrete commitment to the step they will take to move forward toward that vision.

- **Publicize the Program:** If it will be a multifaith discussion, be sure to publicize that and emphasize that all are welcome. Choose a location and time for a multifaith discussion that will be welcoming and appropriate for all. (Please download the “Planning a Multifaith Children’s Sabbath” at [www.childrensdefense.org/ChildrensSabbaths-Planning](http://www.childrensdefense.org/ChildrensSabbaths-Planning) for additional suggestions for planning multifaith events.)
Multifaith Discussion Outline for Children’s Sabbath

Multifaith Discussion Outline

Introduction (15 minutes)

1. Introduction to Session

Introduce the purpose of the time together. You could say something like:

“This weekend marks the 26th annual National Observance of Children’s Sabbaths® Celebration. It is an occasion when people of all faiths across our nation focus on their shared concern for children in poverty and children who face other serious problems. It is a time when people of different religious traditions focus on the shared values of love, justice and protecting children. It is also a time when people of faith and places of worship commit to new responses to love and protect children, end child poverty and pursue justice for children.

In our gathering here today, we will have a chance to learn more about the problems facing children in our state and nation and to share our particular concerns for children. Then, we will have time to share from our own religious traditions and learn about others. Finally, we will have a chance to discuss what steps we can take after we leave to move forward with hope to seek love and justice for every child.”

2. Setting Guidelines to Ensure a “Safe Space” for Multifaith Conversation

Establish agreements for the discussion to ensure it feels like a “safe space” for all participants.* Be clear that there is to be no proselytizing; this is not a time to persuade someone to adopt your faith tradition or to compare traditions with an intention of establishing superiority or “the truth.” This is a time to share about your tradition and learn about the traditions of others in an atmosphere of respect with a desire to understand different perspectives and experiences.

*Interfaith Youth Core offers these guidelines for setting a safe space for conversation:

**Introduce the kind of discussion we will be having today:**
Tell participants: “You will be asked to talk about your faith or values today with others who don’t necessarily share your beliefs and ways of life.”

**Brainstorm the guidelines for this unique discussion:**
- What do you need from yourself and others in order to feel safe having this conversation?
- Take notes on your group’s responses and then read the responses aloud to conclude the discussion.

**Here’s a list of key safe space guidelines. When your group is done brainstorming, add to the list anything you might have missed:**
- Everyone has a right to pass (decline to share or to read aloud).
- Everything said is confidential.
- Seek clarification if you don’t understand something someone else is saying.
- Make sure to listen to others without interrupting.
- Suspend your judgment.
- Use “I” statements.
- Remember the importance of the other person’s faith or ethical tradition in his or her own life.
- Don’t expect others to know everything about your own tradition.
3. Participant Introductions

Invite participants to introduce themselves, sharing their name and something they hope to take from the time together. If the group is small (12 or fewer people), the sharing can be done with the whole group. If the group is larger, it may work best to ask people to turn to several others near them and share in groups of four.

Sharing Concern for Children (20 minutes)

4. “From Weeping to Work” (5 minutes)

Read aloud the excerpt from Hope for the Future: Answering God’s Call to Justice for Our Children on Handout 1. (You as the facilitator can read it aloud. Alternatively, if it is a smaller group you can invite participants who wish to take turns reading paragraphs.)

Before the reading, tell participants that the excerpt is from a book, Hope for the Future: Answering God’s Call to Justice for Our Children, written by Shannon Daley-Harris, religious advisor for the Children’s Defense Fund who launched the National Observance of Children’s Sabbaths in 1992.

Add that the chapter, of which this is an excerpt, refers to a passage from the Hebrew prophet Jeremiah — a text common to the three Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity and Islam — and that later in the session there will be an opportunity to read that text and for each person present to share a text or teaching or practice from their own religious or ethical tradition.

5. “Moments in America” (5 minutes)

Distribute copies of Handout 2 “Moments in America” (below). Allow a minute for participants to read through the Moments silently. You can invite them to jot notes or mark the statistics that surprise them, affect them most deeply or other responses.

6. Our Particular Concerns (15 minutes)

Invite participants to share about a child or children for whom they have a special concern. Questions to prompt responses might include:

a. “Who are the children for whom you weep?”

b. “When have you felt so much sadness, pain or numbness at the suffering of children that you have turned away? When have you let yourself feel that pain at children’s suffering? What has made the difference between the two experiences?”

c. “What other feelings or experiences arise for you at injustice affecting children?”

Again, in groups larger than a dozen, invite participants to share in groups of three or four with those seated near them. Let them know in advance that there is about 15 minutes for this sharing. Provide a two-minute alert before the time is up to ensure that all members of the group who wish have an opportunity to share.

Moving Forward with Hope to Provide Love and Justice for Children (55 minutes)

7. Moving Forward with Hope (5 minutes)

Read aloud the excerpts from Hope for the Future: “There is Hope for Your Future; Your Children Shall Come Back.”
8. **Sharing from the Richness of Our Sacred Traditions (20 minutes)**

Distribute copies of the handout with passages from a variety of religious traditions which may stimulate or supplement responses. (You can point out the first text under “Judaism” and note that it is the text that inspired the book chapter from which we’ve been reading excerpts.)

Tell participants that in a moment you will be inviting them to share what from their tradition gives them hope and guidance for the work of justice and care for children. Note that what they share doesn’t have to be from a sacred text; it could be a practice or a teaching. (Also, they absolutely do not need to be restricted to the passages on the handouts. This is a time for open sharing.)

Allow a few moments for participants to reflect on what they will share and to look over the passages on the handout, if they wish.

Invite sharing. If the group is large, invite people to form groups of three or four — ideally with others of different traditions. Remind them of the agreements at the start of the session that will make this a safe and comfortable space in which to share.

(If the group is large and has divided into smaller groups, as the time to end this segment nears, invite all back into one large group. If time allows, you could invite several people to share any insights or takeaways from the sharing time, to give the whole group a glimpse of what was shared in other groups.)

9. **Responses to Seek Justice and Care for Children (20 minutes)**

Open up discussion about what participants intend to do to move forward with hope and seek justice and love for every child.

Offer information about a variety of ways that participants can be involved in long-term responses to seek justice and care for all children. Consider preparing handouts or inviting organizations, agencies and programs to provide handouts or set up tables with information that participants can visit, or have a number of speakers provide a brief (one or two minute) introduction to their work and opportunities to be involved.

One possibility for follow-up is to have monthly study and action groups, using additional chapters from *Hope for the Future: Answering God’s Call to Justice for Our Children* as the basis of discussion, adding additional texts from the spectrum of religious traditions present in a particular study and action group, and then learning about pressing children’s concerns and timely actions to take such as communicating with legislators, using resources from the Children’s Defense Fund. More information about holding such study and action groups is available on CDF’s website under “Faith-based Programs.”

10. **Envisioning the Restoration of Children to Community (5 minutes)**

If time permits and it fits with the flow of the preceding discussion say, “The restoration of children to community is the ‘hope for the future’ in the passage read earlier. If you are comfortable, I invite you to close your eyes and envision what the promise of children restored to their community would look like for us in our day. What does ‘hope for the future’ look like to you, when you think about children?”

Allow a few minutes for participants to do so in silence.

Then ask again for responses aloud, summarized in a word or phrase: “What does hope for the future look like to you, when you think about children and justice?”

Consider having index cards available for participants to write their vision of a future of hope for children and their concrete commitment of what step they will take to move forward toward that vision.

It was a beautiful October morning, and I stood in line at the neighborhood Starbucks, thinking about my half-caf, iced, venti, skim, two-pump, no-whip mocha. The line was long and moved slowly as the baristas made other people’s equally high-maintenance orders, so I picked up a copy of the New York Times and began to read. I read, that is, until the print began to swim in front of my tear-filled eyes. This is as far as I got:

Kete Krachi, Ghana — Just before 5 a.m., with the sky still dark over Lake Volta, Mark Kwadwo was roused from his spot on the damp dirt floor. It was time for work.

Shivering in the predawn chill, he helped paddle a canoe a mile out from shore. For five more hours, as his co-workers yanked up a fishing net, Mark bailed water to keep the canoe from swamping.

He had last eaten the day before. His broken wooden paddle was so heavy he could barely lift it. But he raptly followed each command from Kwadwo Takyi, the powerfully built 31-year-old in the back of the canoe who freely deals out beatings.

Mark Kwadwo is six years old. About 30 pounds, dressed in a pair of blue and red underpants and a Little Mermaid T-shirt, he looks more like an oversized toddler than a boat hand.

He is too young to understand why he has ended up in this fishing village, a two-day trek from his home. But the three older boys who work with him know why. Like Mark, they are indentured servants, leased by their impoverished parents to Takyi for as little as $20 a year.¹

Weeping

I stood there in line at the Starbucks weeping, overcome by such a painful sense of despair and helplessness at changing the child’s circumstances, at bringing him home to his family, that I could read no more.

I wasn’t the only one who wept over Mark Kwadwo. The New York Times got many letters in response to the article, including this one from a teacher. She wrote, in part,

There are moments when there is value in simply feeling the deep pain of another’s situation. But in an age when most of us . . . already feel powerless about what happens in the world, a little bit of guidance toward action — anything to hang on to — would have been both kind and potentially helpful for all.²

Have you ever felt that way? That you cannot bear to let yourself feel another’s pain when you feel helpless to ease it?

It is not just the suffering of a six-year-old half a world away that is cause for weeping and lament today. Here, even here in our nation, more than fifteen million children live in poverty and suffer undeserved deprivation and limitations and obstacles.³

Here, even here, more than four and a half million children don’t have health coverage and may not be able to see a doctor when needed.⁴

Here, even here, children — especially black and Latino boys — are being pushed along a cradle-to-prison pipeline so that a black boy still in elementary school today faces a one-in-three risk of incarceration in his lifetime.⁵

Here, yes, even here, there are children facing enormous odds against them — poverty and violence and lost childhood — with only their faith and their families to cling to. Children like eight-year-old Gail, who was asked to write an essay about her Chicago neighborhood for a contest sponsored by a bank. The bank had expected to receive essays telling of friendly postmen and games of hopscotch; instead they received essays like this one from Gail:

In my neighborhood there is a lot of shooting and three people got shot. On the next day when I was going to school I saw a little stream of blood on the ground. One day after school me and my mother had to dodge bullets — I was not scared. There is a church and a school that I go to in my neighborhood. There are a lot of stores in my neighborhood also. There are robbers that live in my building, they broke into our house twice. There are rowhouses in my neighborhood and a man got shot and he was dead. By King High School Susan Harris got shot and she died. It was in the newspaper. When me and my mother was going to church we could see the fire from the guns being shot in 4414 building. I was not scared. In my neighborhood there are too many fights. I have never been in a fight before. There are many trees in my neighborhood. God is going to come back one day and judge the whole world. Not just my neighborhood. I know these are really, really bad things, but I have some good things in my neighborhood. Like sometimes my neighborhood is peaceful and quiet and there is no shooting. When me and my mother and some of my friends go to the lake we have a lot of fun. Sometimes the children in my building go to Sunday School with me and my mother. Also the building I live in is so tall I can see downtown and the lake. It looks so pretty. I believe in God and I know one day we will be in a gooder place than we are now.⁶

Sometimes the stories are so sad and the pain is so great that we turn away. Have you ever felt that way? Sometimes the numbers are simply numbing, and we can’t even cry. Have you ever felt that way? And then sometimes we let ourselves feel that pain and let our hearts weep. Have you ever felt that way?


³ The Children’s Defense Fund, The State of America’s Children 2014 (Washington, DC: Children’s Defense Fund, 2015), 4. These and all following data are from The State of America’s Children 2014, which made calculations based on the poverty data from 2012 — the most recent available. Visit the Children’s Defense Fund website at www.childrensdefense.org for additional information and data, which are updated annually or as new numbers become available.

⁴ Ibid, 6.


Handout 2:

Moments in America

Every 2 seconds during the school year a public school student receives an out-of-school suspension.
Every 9 seconds during the school year a public high school student drops out.*
Every 20 seconds a baby is born to an unmarried mother.
Every 21 seconds a child is arrested.
Every 30 seconds during the school year a public school student is corporally punished.*
Every 34 seconds a baby is born into poverty.
Every 47 seconds a child is abused or neglected.
Every 56 seconds a baby is born without health insurance.
Every 67 seconds a baby is born into extreme poverty.
Every 1-and-a-half minutes a baby is born to a teen mother.
Every 1-and-a-half minutes a baby is born at low birthweight.
Every 3-and-a-half minutes a child is arrested for a drug offense.
Every 8 minutes a child is arrested for a violent offense.
Every 22 minutes a baby dies before his or her first birthday.
Every hour a child or teen dies from an accident.
Every 3 hours and 15 minutes a child or teen is killed by guns.
Every 4-and-a-half hours a child commits suicide.
Every 5-and-a-half hours a child is killed by abuse or neglect.
Every 11 hours a baby’s mother dies due to complications from pregnancy or childbirth.

* Based on 180 school days a year. See Endnotes at www.childrensdefense.org/library/state-of-americas-children/ for The State of America’s Children for citations.

Learn more about what every moment brings for

American Indian and Alaska Native Children
Asian and Pacific Islander Children
Black Children
Hispanic Children

Learn more stats about the state of children in America at www.childrensdefense.org/library/state-of-americas-children/each-day-in-america.html on our Each Day in America page.
There is Hope for Your Future; Your Children Shall Come Back

We are summoned out of grief to this work with a promise to sustain us in that difficult calling. The promise isn’t vague or otherworldly — it’s not the “gooder place” that Gail believes is her only hope. No, God’s promise is embodied in the very real well-being and restoration of our children….

There is hope for your future…. True, more than fifteen million children in our rich nation are living in poverty, but we know what to do to bring a better tomorrow. Children can’t move out of poverty on their own, but there are effective ways that we as a nation can lift children and their families out of poverty or at least protect them from poverty’s worst effects. We know what works. Programs that reduce poverty by providing cash or near-cash assistance — such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, commonly known as food stamps), the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (commonly called welfare), and the Earned Income Tax Credit — can ease the worst effects of poverty for millions of children. Government safety-net programs lifted nine million children from poverty in 2012. Child poverty would have been 57 percent higher without government tax credits and food, housing, and energy benefits, and extreme poverty would have been 240 percent higher. Still, no child deserves to live in poverty, so there is more work to be done so that every family has the job training, living wage, health care, child care, and other supports they need to keep children out of poverty and ready to thrive.

There is hope for your future…. Four and a half million children may lack health coverage today, but we have the real opportunity to ensure that every child in our nation has health coverage if we join our voices to demand justice through affordable, available coverage and reach out to ensure that families get enrolled in the coverage that is available. There’s no mystery: children need regular health care for their developing minds and bodies. They need timely treatment for illness and injury. It will save our nation money in the long run, but more importantly, it will save lives and is the right thing to do. Imagine the better tomorrow when every child has the benefit of health coverage and a shot at good health.

There is hope for your future…. It is true that a black boy born in 2001 faces a one-in-three risk of imprisonment in his lifetime, but we can change the odds. We can work to provide a better tomorrow for boys of color and for us all. What is currently painting such a grim picture for young boys of color, pushing them along the pipeline to prison? Poverty, racism, lack of health and mental health care, abuse and neglect, failing schools, dangerous neighborhoods. But we know how to address and solve those problems; we know what works. CDF Freedom Schools® program sites have welcomed children who might have traveled through the pipeline to prison, touching the lives of more than 149,000 pre-K-12 children since 1995, and more than seven thousand college students and recent graduates have been trained by CDF to deliver this empowering model with reading and other enrichment, parent involvement, and community-building skills and experiences. Head Start programs have demonstrated that investing in early childhood development saves us financial and human costs, as Head Start graduates do better in school and are more likely to stay out of trouble. Innovative schools have shown how high expectations, excellent

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7 The State of America’s Children 2014, 5.
teaching, and comprehensive support can fill graduation stages instead of prison cells with black, Latino, poor, and at-risk students. Even something as simple as mentoring a young person as a Big Brother or Big Sister can transform his or her life . . . and ours, too.

*There is hope for your future.* … As for Mark Kwadwo, the six-year-old boat hand in Ghana — someone read about his story and didn’t just weep, but got to work. In Missouri, Pam and Randy Cope read the New York Times story about Mark and wanted to help. The parents of four had suffered a devastating loss when their fifteen-year-old son, Jantsen, died suddenly from an undetected heart defect in 1999. After weeping, they got to work. In Jantsen’s memory, Pam and Randy launched Touch a Life Ministries, an organization helping children in dire situations in Cambodia, Vietnam, Nicaragua, and elsewhere. “Their grief — and hope — have led them on a journey to try to care for hurting children of the world,” said Randy’s brother, the Rev. Mike Cope.9

After learning of Mark Kwadwo’s plight, Pam teamed up with a small nonprofit in Ghana, Pacodep, run by a Kete Krachi school teacher and a Dutch volunteer. Together, they rescued not only Mark but the other children indentured to the same master, “paying for new nets, boat repairs, and other needs in exchange for the children’s freedom.” The freed children, whose destitute parents could not provide for them at home, now enjoy the security of shelter, meals, schooling, and recreation in an … orphange.10

A staff member who works at the orphanage prays for the children still in bondage — and for their masters. “For slavery to end, the people who exploit children also must be changed, the missionary said. ‘There are many more children,’ he said, ‘and God is working through a lot of people to show us what to do next.’”11

The name of Mark’s new school? The Village of Hope. There is hope for your future, says our God. We are called by the God of hope to embody a village, nation, and world of hope….

*There is hope for your future.* …[H]ow will you make your voice heard as you call for justice and for change? You, whose eyes have been full of tears: what new opportunities for action do you see before you? You who have wept for the suffering of children: what is the work you are called to do? You who have lamented the children who are lost: what is the hope for their future that will sustain you?

A voice is heard in Ramah, in Washington, in your community: what will you proclaim?


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11 Tryggestad, “Oprah Winfrey.”
Handout 4: Sacred Texts on Love and Justice for Children

Following are four excerpts from sacred texts of each religious tradition. There are, of course, many more passages from sacred texts as well as teachings and practices from each tradition related to poverty, love, justice, children, faith and action. What inspires, guides or sustains you from your tradition? What resonates with you from another tradition?

The Bahá’í Faith

O children of dust! Tell the rich of the midnight sighing of the poor, lest heedlessness lead them into the path of destruction, and deprive them of the Tree of Wealth. To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues. (Bahá’u’lláh, The Hidden Words of Bahá’u’lláh, Persian No. 49)

O ye rich ones on earth! The poor in your midst are My trust; guard ye My trust, and be not intent only on your own ease. (Bahá’u’lláh, The Hidden Words of Bahá’u’lláh, Persian No. 54)

Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity. Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, an answerer of the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge. Be fair in thy judgment, and guarded in thy speech. Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men. Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts. Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive. Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring. (Bahá’u’lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh, p. 285)

God has created all, and all return to God. Therefore, love humanity with all your heart and soul. If you meet a poor man, assist him; if you see the sick, heal him; reassure the affrighted one, render the cowardly noble and courageous, educate the ignorant, associate with the stranger. (Abdu’l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 290)

Buddhism

If beings knew, as I know, the fruit of sharing gifts, they would not enjoy their use without sharing them, nor would the taint of stinginess obsess the heart and stay there. Even if it were their last bit, their last morsel of food, they would not enjoy its use without sharing it, if there were anyone to receive it. (Itivuttaka 18)

Better than a hundred years lived in idleness and in weakness is a single day lived with courage and powerful striving. (The Dhammapada, 112)

Whatever living beings there may be—feeble or strong, small or large, seen or unseen, those who live far or those near, those who are born and those who are yet to be born—may all beings, without exception, experience a happy mind. Let one not deceive another nor despise any person whatever in any place. In anger or ill will let one not wish any harm to another. Let one’s thoughts of boundless love pervade the whole world without any obstruction, without any hatred, without any enmity. (Samyutta Nikaya, The Buddha Speaks)

It is in this way that we must train ourselves: by liberation of the self through love. We will develop love, we will practice it, we will make it both a way and a basis, take our stand upon it, store it up, and thoroughly set it going. (Samyutta Nikaya, The Buddha Speaks)
Christianity

Then someone came to him and said, ‘Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?’ And he said to him, ‘Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.’ He said to him, ‘Which ones?’ And Jesus said, ‘You shall not kill; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother; also, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ The young man said to him, ‘I have kept all these; what do I still lack?’ Jesus said to him, ‘If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.’ When the young man heard this word, he went away grieving, for he had many possessions. *(Matthew 19:16-22)*

When [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
  to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
  and recovery of sight to the blind,
  to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” *(Luke 4:16-21)*

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing?’ And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ *(Matthew 25:31-40)*

Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

“Blessed are you who are poor,
  for yours is the kingdom of God.
“Blessed are you who are hungry now,
  for you will be filled.
“Blessed are you who weep now,
  for you will laugh.
“Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

“But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

“Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry.

“Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.

“Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

(Luke 6:20-26)

**Hinduism**

Ajitashas ajanishthas ete sambhataro vahadhu saubhagaya
No one is superior, none inferior. All are brothers marching forward to prosperity. *(Ancient Hindu hymn)*

The husband and wife of the house should not turn away any who comes at eating time and asks for food. If food is not available, a place to rest, water for refreshing one’s self, a reed mat to lay one’s self on, and pleasing words entertaining the guest — these at least never fail in the houses of the good. *(Apastamba Dharmasutra 8.2)*

A householder must give (as much food) as he is able (to spare) to those who do not cook for themselves, and to all beings one must distribute (food) without detriment (to one’s own interest). *(Manu Smriti 4.32)*

In the kingdom of God there is no premature death or suffering, everyone is healthy and beautiful. No one lives in poverty and want; no one is without learning or virtue. *(The Ramayana)*

**Islam**

And they feed, for the love of God, the indigent, the orphan, and the captive. *(Qur’an 76:8)*

“The creatures of God (i.e., humans) are the children (i.e., liability and responsibility) of God, and the most beloved to God are those who show kind and excellent treatment to His children.” *(Qur’an 60:8)*

Goodness does not consist in turning your face towards East or West. The truly good are those who believe in God and the Last Day, in the angels, the Scripture, and the prophets; who give away some of their wealth, however much they cherish it, to their relatives, to orphans, the needy, travelers and beggars, and to liberate those in bondage; those who keep up the prayer and pay the prescribed alms; who keep pledges whenever they make them; who are steadfast in misfortune, adversity, and times of danger. These are the ones who are true, and it is they who are aware of God. *(Qur’an S. 2:177, M.A.S. Abdel Haleem translation)*

They ask thee what they should spend (In charity.) Say: Whatever wealth Ye spend that is good, Is for parents and kindred and orphans and those in want and for wayfarers and whatever ye do that is good, Allah knoweth it well. *(Qur’an S. 2, 215, IFTA translation)*
Judaism

Thus said the Eternal: A cry is heard in Ramah, wailing, bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, who are gone. Thus said the Eternal: Restrain your voice from weeping, your eyes from shedding tears; for there is reward in your labor — declares the Eternal. They shall return from the enemy’s land, and there is hope for your future — declares the Eternal, and your children shall return to their country. *(Jeremiah 31:15-17)*

Defend the poor and the orphan; do justice to the afflicted and needy. *(Midrash Tefillim 82:3)*

You shall not subvert the rights of the stranger or the fatherless; you shall not take a widow’s garment in pawn. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and that the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore I enjoin you to observe this commandment…when you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not pick it over again; that shall go to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. *(Deuteronomy 24:17-18, 21)*

Although the giving of charity is a sacred obligation, the ultimate aim of tzedakah is to abolish poverty and to enable the poor to help themselves. *(Talmud, Shabbat 63)*

Sikhism

To do good deeds is the best rosary.
Chant on the beads within your heart, and it shall go along with you.
Chant the Name of the Lord, Har, Har, the Lord of the forest.
Have mercy on me, Lord, and unite me with the Sat Sangat, the True Congregation, so that I may be released from Maya’s noose of death.
Whoever, as Gurmukh, serves and works hard,
Is molded and shaped in the true mint of the Shabad, the Word of God.
The Guru has revealed to me the Inaccessible and Unfathomable Lord.
Searching within the body-village, I have found the Lord.
I am just a child; the Lord is my Father, who nurtures and cherishes me.
Please save servant Nanak, Lord; bless him with Your Glance of Grace.
*(SGGS, Ang 1134 Raag Bhaira-o Guru Ram Das)*

One Universal Creator God. By The Grace Of The True Guru:
No one should be proud of his social class and status.
He alone is a Brahmin, who knows God.
Do not be proud of your social class and status, you ignorant fool!
So much sin and corruption comes from this pride.
Everyone says that there are four castes, four social classes.
They all emanate from the drop of God’s Seed
The entire universe is made of the same clay.
The Potter has shaped it into all sorts of vessels.
The five elements join together, to make up the form of the human body.
Who can say which is less, and which is more?
Says Nanak, this soul is bound by its actions.
Without meeting the True Guru, it is not liberated. *(SGGS, Ang 1127-1128 Raag Bhaira-o Guru Amar Das)*
As the king is entangled in kingly affairs, and the egotist in his own egotism,
And the greedy man is enticed by greed, so is the spiritually enlightened being absorbed in the Love of the Lord.
This is what befits the Lord’s servant.
Beholding the Lord near at hand, he serves the True Guru, and he is satisfied through the Kirtan of the Lord’s Praises.
The addict is addicted to his drug, and the landlord is in love with his land.
As the baby is attached to his milk, so the Saint is in love with God.
The scholar is absorbed in scholarship, and the eyes are happy to see.
As the tongue savors the tastes, so does the humble servant of the Lord sing the Glorious Praises of the Lord.
As is the hunger, so is the fulfiller; He is the Lord and Master of all hearts.
Nanak thirsts for the Blessed Vision of the Lord’s Darshan; he has met God, the Inner-knower, the Searcher of hearts. *(SSGS, Ang 613)*

Those who remember God generously help others. *(SGGS)*