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Peace and Reconciliation

In society today there is a common misconception about peace. Many people see peace as a state of social rest and ease that can be negotiated, fought for, or earned, but this view misses the truth of what peace really is. Peace isn't something we can buy or legislate. Across every culture where peace exists, it has been chosen. It stems from a decision to put aside the temptation of sin in exchange for true happiness and connection. When the Apartheid movement stratified and oppressed the black population of South Africa, a Catholic Priest named Desmond Tutu preached about peace and the words he spoke in that era still inspire the world today. Through his belief that peace comes from connecting to those we most dislike, Tutu became a living symbol of what it means to be at peace within yourself before spreading it around you.

With all of the temptation in the world, it's not easy to choose peace. Human instinct tells us to defend ourselves, to match hostility with hostility, and to seek comfort instead of confrontation. Peace is difficult to find because it lies beyond human nature. The pursuit of peace means facing pride, forgiving the unforgivable, and handling conflict with patience instead of rage. Every war, attack, or interpersonal argument traces back to a lack of inner calm, and until individuals find balance within themselves, the world around them will always echo their unrest.

Desmond Tutu understood the importance of inner resolve. As the leader of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, he guided both victims and perpetrators of apartheid through public confession and forgiveness. His principle teaching was that "When you

want peace, you talk not with your friends, but with the ones you least like,” a message that encourages humanity to dismantle the cycle of hate rather than simply pausing it. Tutu’s strength didn’t come from control or dominance but from empathy. His approach to peace required individuals to truly listen, to understand pain from both sides, and to authentically believe in the power of forgiveness as a way to form connections. In doing so, he turned his country’s pain into a model for healing that influenced the entire world.

Today, Tutu’s legacy continues through the Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation, an organization dedicated to carrying forward his belief that peace begins within. The foundation promotes “societal healing through personal transformation,” encouraging individuals to repair their inner conflicts so they can lead with integrity and compassion. One way it teaches this is through its Leading for Humanity program which shows young leaders how moral courage starts with self reflection. As the foundation states, “To be a leader able to work for the good of all humanity, you must engage in the work of self-repair for societal repair.” The foundation also runs the Letters for Peace campaign which invites young people worldwide to reflect on what peace means to them and to write about it, creating a global dialogue of personal introspections. Through educational programs, exhibitions, and the annual Desmond Tutu International Peace Lecture, the organization continues to spread the priest’s message that world peace begins in the hearts of individuals willing to choose understanding over resentment.

The work of the Tutu Foundation reminds us that peace isn’t a product of power, but a practice of perspective. It shows that reconciliation starts with listening, that forgiveness is an act of courage, and that compassion is a leadership skill, not a weakness. From classrooms in South Africa to communities across the globe, their programs guide people towards self-awareness as a

first step toward unity. They prove that Desmond Tutu's message isn't just history, it's a blueprint for the future.

When talking about the environment, people commonly say that "We all live downstream." It's the idea that pollution eventually flows to everyone, but the same idea applies to peace too. When we allow anger, prejudice, or fear to poison one part of society, it eventually reaches us all. Peace, like clean water, depends on everyone doing their part to keep it pure. Desmond Tutu showed that one person's calm can radiate outward, softening an entire nation's rage. His foundation continues that ripple today by reminding the world that peace isn't a condition we achieve once, but a decision we make every day.