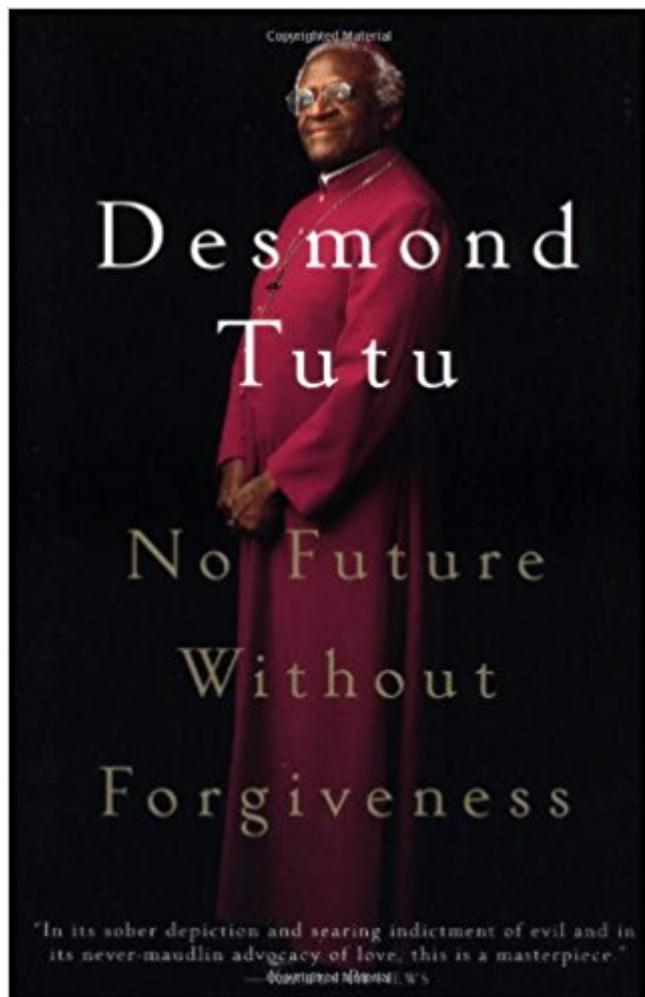


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# No Future Without Forgiveness



## **Synopsis**

The establishment of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission was a pioneering international event. Never had any country sought to move forward from despotism to democracy both by exposing the atrocities committed in the past and achieving reconciliation with its former oppressors. At the center of this unprecedented attempt at healing a nation has been Archbishop Desmond Tutu, whom President Nelson Mandela named as Chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. With the final report of the Commission just published, Archbishop Tutu offers his reflections on the profound wisdom he has gained by helping usher South Africa through this painful experience. In *No Future Without Forgiveness*, Tutu argues that true reconciliation cannot be achieved by denying the past. But nor is it easy to reconcile when a nation "looks the beast in the eye." Rather than repeat platitudes about forgiveness, he presents a bold spirituality that recognizes the horrors people can inflict upon one another, and yet retains a sense of idealism about reconciliation. With a clarity of pitch born out of decades of experience, Tutu shows readers how to move forward with honesty and compassion to build a newer and more humane world.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Archbishop Desmond Tutu stands alongside Nelson Mandela as one of the most iconic figures of the struggle to end apartheid in South Africa. As archbishop of Cape Town throughout the 1980s, Tutu came to symbolize dignified, rational opposition to the iniquities of the apartheid regime, a faithful irreverence for unjust authority that led to his being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984. In 1995 he took up his greatest challenge, as chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the

remarkable yet harrowing attempt by South Africans to come to terms with the gross violations of human rights committed throughout the apartheid era by offering amnesty and forgiveness rather than punishment and dismissal. *No Future Without Forgiveness* is Tutu's remarkable personal memoir of his time as chair of the commission. It records his insistence of the need to discover a "third way" in the healing of the national psyche and his powerful belief that "we can indeed transcend the conflicts of the past, we can hold hands as we realize our common humanity." Tutu's characteristic humor, resilience, and compassion are evoked in a way that demonstrates how essential they have been to his unique political style--and his ability to get results where all others failed. He recalls the darkest days of apartheid's "vicious awfulness" when, preaching about God's authority, he was "frequently tempted to whisper in God's ear, 'For goodness sake, why don't You make it more obvious that You are in charge?'" *No Future Without Forgiveness* could be profitably read alongside Antjie Krog's equally compelling *Country of My Skull*, as it considers the emotional toll that such a process of national soul-searching has had upon its participants. As Tutu himself points out, "It is a costly business to try to heal a wounded and traumatized people, and those engaging in that crucial task will perhaps bear the brunt themselves ... we were, in Henri Nouwen's celebrated phrase, 'wounded healers.'" --Rachel Holmes, .co.uk --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

This insightful book about South Africa's healing process is no simple feel-good tale. In 1995, Tutu was looking forward to a well-earned retirement from his role as Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town. He had given his life to the antiapartheid struggle and had spoken the truth to those in power so many times that, in 1984, he received the Nobel Peace Prize. Still, in 1996, President Mandela and others prevailed upon him to postpone retirement's pleasures to give South Africa one more thing: his leadership as chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Tutu speaks frankly of this call, of the struggle that preceded it and of the betrayals and jubilations of this unique commission. The TRC's work was unprecedented not only in its emphasis on restorative over retributive justice but in the spirituality that permeated its work, the bulk of which constituted hearings from the "victims" and "perpetrators" of apartheid. Ubuntu, Tutu explains, is the African expression that was at the heart of the TRC's labors. Meaning something like "a person is a person through other people," ubuntu sums up Tutu's philosophical framework for addressing apartheid's hard truths and beginning the reconciliation process necessary to move beyond apartheid's legacy. Despite the occasional factual inconsistency and some clichés (the book seems hastily written), Tutu's wisdom and experience come through. Human rights, he affirms, cannot stand without ubuntu's deeper

foundation; the future cannot be without forgiveness. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Born in South African on October 7, 1931, Desmond Tutu grew up during a time of great pain and chaos. Despite growing up in a country that actively discriminated against him due to the color of his skin, Tutu was able join the Anglican clergy and graduate from college. Eventually he was elected as Archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa, where he was able to help guide the country through the transition into democracy. Desmond Tutu was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 along with many other awards over the years for his defense of human rights. In 1995, a year after the apartheid had ended, Desmond Tutu was appointed as chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) by President Nelson Mandela. This commission had the mandate to "provide as complete a picture as possible of the gross human rights violations that happened" (page 91) between 1960 and 1994. As one could image this was a daunting task for a variety of reason, not the least of that the commission only had two years to complete the task. Tutu's book "No Future Without Forgiveness", published in 1999, is a look back over the years of the commission, attempting to explain some of their actions as well as to promote the power of forgiveness in breaking the cycle of violence. To this end, Tutu starts off the book with a few chapters exploring the cultural background of South Africa during the apartheid years. Special attention was given to the emotions and worldview of the black, colored and Indian members of South Africa sociality as their voices have normally been squelched. After laying the ground work, Tutu goes on to explains why and how South Africa decided upon launching the TRC in the first place. For example, why did the newly elected black African government choose to offer amnesty instead of pursuing criminal charges like in Nuremberg (War World II's war criminal court)? Following this discourse on why the TRC method was chosen, Tutu embarks on one of the best sections of the entire book. Namely, he answers the question of justice in light of the amnesty being offered: "Are the miscreants not going virtually scot-free, since all they must do is give a full amount of all the materials facts relating to the offense?" (page 50). Drawing on both his heritage as an African and his theological training as a clergy member, Tutu weaves an agreement showing how true justice is more than just punishing someone for the wrong they committed. It is about "ubuntu", the "healing of breaches, the redress of imbalances, the restoration of broken relationships, a seeking to rehabilitate both the victims and the perpetrator, who should be given the opportunity to be reintegrated into the community he has injured by his offense" (page 55). After explaining the why's and how's of the TRC, Tutu spends most of the book telling the stories of the commission. Stories about some of the most horrible

human rights crimes in world; crimes committed across a nation with the simple goal of making one racial group more powerful and rich than all the others. In an interesting twist, these shocking stories serve as a turning point in the book as they are coupled with some of the most powerful stories of forgiveness known to history. Fathers who forgive the men who tortured murdered their children; families who forgave those who killed and burned their loved ones while holding party next to the burning corpse. The combined natures of these stories serve to both explain the situation more fully as well as to make the reader's personal grudges seem petty and dumb. To that end, Tutu spends the last chapter elaborating on the concept of forgiveness and the freedom that comes from forgiveness. His hope is that people will grasp the power of forgiveness and apply it both to their private lives and in their society. As he states on page 279, "true forgiveness deals with the past, all of the past, to make the future possible...we have to accept that what we do we do for generation past, present, and yet to come. That is what makes a community a community or a people a people - for better or worse." In conclusion, Desmond Tutu's book "No Future Without Forgiveness" is a great exploration into the concept of forgiveness while bring to light some of the why's and how's of the South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Tutu does a great job a highlighting both the successes and failures of the TRC while keeping the overall message consistent. It is definitely a book to be read throughout the world, especially within the church as it helps put feet to Jesus' commandment to love and bless one's enemies (Matthew 5:44 and Luke 6:27-28).

Desmond Tutu has been in the middle of extreme tensions in re-ordering government and communal life. He has seen and heard some of the most atrocious deeds that can be dealt out by devious officials and citizens. Through it all he has insisted upon the need for openness and trust amongst even the most militant and hurtful perpetrators of injustice. Forgiveness in the political/social realm has principles underlying it that can be fruitfully applied by individuals in their relationships, as well. The nature of forgiveness is critical for people to understand if they are to live together on this planet.

Desmond Tutu is simply a brilliant man. I had the opportunity to meet him several years ago and didn't really appreciate at the time what kind of work he'd done. I read this to fully understand the idea of forgiveness which is often seen as a weakness. He lays out in clear terms how forgiveness cannot be a weakness because it is harder to do than revenge. It is harder to keep someone else's actions from defining and confining you the rest of your life than to give in to them and act upon the instinct to hurt your perpetrators back. The fact that these eye-witness accounts come from people

who could look their assailants in the face and find some humanity after all was said and done is incredible and humbling. I would recommend this read for anyone and especially for those who are trying to find a way to cope with victimhood or perhaps to do self-reflection on your own faults and how you may have hurt others and need to be freed of that defining action.

No Future without Forgiveness is a wonderful account of the remarkable work of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Committees. Archbishop Tutu offers an inside view of this work, which he chaired and guided, acknowledging some of the bumps in the road as well as the heart-breaking and heart-healing times of success. He provides "texture" by recounting details of the lived experience, in his own familiar, sometimes humorous, always honest style. He also describes something of how significant the example of the Truth and Reconciliation work has been in other afflicted parts of the world--in Rwanda and Ireland, for instance. Whether a reader is hoping for encouragement and guidance for truth and reconciliation in the personal sphere or hopeful signs of God's working out the Reign of justice, peace, and universal reconciliation, she will be inspired and grateful.

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