

DREAM CHASERS

BECOMING RESILIENT
IN THE FACE OF HARDSHIP

UTA SCHMIDT



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ENDORSEMENTS

Every human being *IS* a story. *Dream Chasers* is an exploration of raw human experience; invitations to look through the eyes of another's story and back at our own. Such self-reflection is essential to transformation and there is no place safer than inside the holy ground of another person's story.

William Paul Young
Author of *The Shack*

Dream Chasers is a beautiful project that gets to the heart of the challenge of the Christian life: navigating through seasons of pain and contradiction by trusting God, who is always good. You can't help but be inspired as you read the stories of trials and victories of some of my personal heroes. I'm sure you will find hope and courage to follow through on your own journey as you pursue your destiny and fulfill your God-given dreams.

Bill Johnson
Bethel Church – Redding, CA
Author of *When Heaven Invades Earth* and *God is Good*

Dream Chasers is an encouraging book with testimonies of several of us, but all of you that are reading this book have a dream, and it started with a dream from the heart of God. As you chase the dream in your life and overcome the challenges and obstacles on your way, you will be fulfilled and you will see God working through you!

Loren Cunningham

Founder of *Youth With A Mission (YWAM)* and author of *Is it really You, God?*

Dream Chasers is a book that encourages the reader to pursue the fullness of his calling and destiny. This is a book about getting up when life knocks you down. It is about taking risks and seeing the glory of God's kingdom come in all its fullness. It is about how love changes everything. It is a book that must be read.

Canon Andrew White

Vicar Emeritus of Baghdad

Author of *Faith Under Fire* and *The Vicar of Baghdad*

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WOUNDED HEALERS CHOOSING FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION

*God, I know you are in charge, but why don't
you make it slightly more obvious?!*

Desmond Tutu

Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town

They had been driving for hours in the scorching heat along the vast endless plains of the Karoo desert, and the children started nagging and bickering in the backseat of their station wagon. “This heat is killing me,” Desmond mumbled and then jerked his head toward his children. “Stop fighting! For goodness’ sake, this is driving me crazy!” He was on edge, and so was everyone else. The youngest two, Naomi and Mpho, started crying. “We’re so hot! Can’t we stop? This always takes so long!”

They hadn’t even managed half of the sixteen-hour trip from the Eastern Cape up to Krugersdorp near Johannesburg, where they

would spend the night with Desmond's parents. The next day, they would complete the last five-hour stretch to Swaziland. "We'll take a break soon," Desmond's wife Leah tried to calm the children. But in reality, they would have to press on. There were no hotels or inns on the way that would accommodate blacks at any price. "Apartheid was active at full force,"⁴⁰ Tutu writes in his book, *The Book of Forgiving*. And that was the reason for their trip.

Several years before, in 1953, the apartheid government of South Africa had instituted the Bantu Education Act, which introduced a racially-segregated education system. Enforcing an inferior education for blacks, it essentially relegated them to manual labor. Desmond and Leah had both left the teaching profession in protest, and they had vowed never to subject their children to this arrangement. The only way to bypass Bantu education was to send their children to boarding school in the neighboring country of Swaziland.

MIRAGE VS. OASIS

The trip was always a drag. Aside from fatigue and the unbearable heat, anticipation of their impending separation for the next boarding school term added another level of peevishness to the atmosphere in the car. Trevor and Theresa, the two eldest seated by the doors, rolled down the windows in hopes of catching a breeze, but the desert wind was like the scorching air that rushes out when opening an oven.

They were just reaching a remote desert town when Desmond's eyes lit up at the sight of an oasis in this endless desert drive: a sign on the side of the road that read, "Walls Ice Cream." That was exactly what they needed! He pointed out the sign, and immediately the mood in the car lifted. Desmond could almost feel the cold,

creaminess refreshing his scorched throat as they pulled into the driveway. He stumbled out of the car and walked up to the door.

Desmond had hardly entered the store when the boy standing behind the register stabbed his hand in the air, pointing to the window and yelling, “Kaffir!⁴¹ Read the sign!” Desmond looked at the window, and as he recounts in his book, he read, “No black man’s feet allowed on the hallowed ground of this store”⁴² – except probably for scrubbing the toilets and floors.

That was it! The pain of the impending separation from the children, their whining, the heat, the fatigue - and now this! Anger flared up inside of him, and he rushed out and told everyone, “Get back in the car!” The children were confused but could sense the trouble brewing in the air. No one said a word. “I was furious,” Desmond writes. “And like so many frustrated parents, my temper flared. Underneath my temper, however, was a bright, burning wound.”⁴³

SECOND-CLASS CITIZENS

Even though this had been a less-significant instance of discrimination, with no physical injuries, the hurt was very deep. “It was a stinging hurt that was heaped on all the other hurts that were commonplace in our daily lives under apartheid. We were so used to these incidents that, at the time, I didn’t consciously realize I had to forgive the boy behind the register,”⁴⁴ he relates in his book.

Desmond Tutu’s life is a story of numerous personal assaults, obstacles, and hardships, all stemming from the time of his struggle against the apartheid regime. In a similar way to Nelson Mandela, he also had to take a long walk to freedom. Still one of the world’s most famous priests, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984, for

his relentless efforts to speak up for the oppressed and fight injustice. As a black man in South Africa, the injustices he himself suffered were manifold. He was beaten, handcuffed, ridiculed, and received many death threats, but these assaults were not the worst apartheid had to offer.

“Growing up under the apartheid regime had such tremendous effect on how you saw yourself as a human being,” Tutu disclosed in our interview. “You always felt you were a second-class citizen, that you were not quite as ‘human’ as the others – the whites. The apartheid ideology affected our way of thinking and we were often deeply humiliated by all the segregation laws.” He continued, “We had separate entrances for blacks and whites to go into the bank or the post office, and we had separate exits – but then we all used the same street. It was ridiculous!”

THE UNFORGIVABLE OFFENSE

Tutu shared one such experience that occurred after the Tutu family had just returned to South Africa from England. For four years, while Desmond completed his Master’s of Theology at King’s College in London, they lived in England, and their youngest daughter Mpho was born there. Tutu was called back to South Africa to be the Anglican Dean of St. Mary’s Cathedral in Johannesburg. One Sunday afternoon back in South Africa, the Tutus were outside with their children when little Mpho saw some white children playing on swings on a playground. “I want to go there and play too,” she said. But Desmond had to tell her, “No sweetheart, you can’t.” Mpho didn’t understand. “But why? There are other children playing over there!” she demanded.

“That was so difficult,” Desmond described in our conversation. “I just wanted the ground to open and swallow me up. How do I tell my child, ‘Yes, you are a child, but you are not a child like these other children on the swings and roundabouts?’” Tutu continued, “Instances like these were the most difficult. It’s one thing how apartheid affects you as a grown-up, but as a parent it’s a total different thing how this affects your child, and there was nothing you could do about it! That was the worst aspect of apartheid, because it made you feel so helpless.”

Tutu willingly tolerated intimidation, death threats, and discrimination. But it really gutted him when it involved his family. In an interview with Norwegian journalist Frederik Sklavan he shares, “One thing I found almost unforgivable is when the people who tried to threaten me would call our house, and one of my children would pick up the phone. I should think they would say, ‘Go get your father or mother.’ But instead they would say to my children, ‘Tell your father we are going to kill him!’ I could see the anxious look on their face after they hung up the phone, and it made me really angry,” Tutu describes. “I chose this work to fight against apartheid; my children didn’t.” Another time, Tutu’s wife Leah was handcuffed and paraded through the streets of Johannesburg for a minor traffic offense. “And that really made me furious, it took long to forgive – that type of offense.”⁴⁵

NO FUTURE WITHOUT FORGIVENESS

In an interview with broadcast journalist David Frost, Tutu discloses that in the early stages of the struggle against apartheid, he experienced anger towards God. “I would often say ‘God, I know you are in charge, I just wish you would make it slightly more obvious!’ I

didn't doubt God, I never have, but when things in our nation didn't improve, I sometimes got really angry at him. I would rail at him and say, 'For goodness sake! Why don't you do something about this!'"⁴⁶ With time, though, he learned that there is only one way forward, and that is the path of forgiveness.

"What I learned throughout my life is that there is no future without forgiveness," Tutu reiterated in our conversation. "I often would repeat the saying, *there go I but for the grace of God*. I was constantly reminding myself that if I had been exposed to the same pressures, circumstances and conditions as the particular person who humiliated me or insulted my pride, could I be sure that I would not have done the same and turned out the same way? No, I couldn't. I hope I would not have, but I couldn't be sure that I would not have turned out to be an oppressor."

Tutu's core message to the nation of South Africa and to the world has been that there is no future without forgiveness. He served in a vital role as the chair of the nation's *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (TRC), facilitating the process of forgiveness and reconciliation in the aftermath of the abolition of apartheid. But before going deeper into Tutu's insights on the process of how forgiveness is possible, even for the most ghastly atrocities, let's first have a look at Desmond Tutu's early life, how his main message developed, and how he became one of the world's most famous priests.

ESCAPING DEATH

Tutu's career was not a stellar one, planned out or pursued in detail. On the contrary, it was all rather accidental. Desmond Tutu never aspired to become a priest, although one of his main mentors and

role models in his early life was a priest. Tutu says about his own life that God “forced” him into his destiny.⁴⁷ This becomes clearer when you compare what he had originally planned for his life with what he ultimately became.

Desmond Tutu was born in 1931 in Klerksdorp, an impoverished township on the outskirts of Johannesburg. He was a frail and sickly baby, and his parents feared he would not survive and would end up just like his older brother, who had died before Desmond was born. To everyone’s surprise he did survive, and his grandmother then gave him the middle name Mpilo, which means *life*. Desmond was a very cheerful child and was loved for his great sense of humor. He was a peace lover and as such had a mild and non-confrontational temperament.⁴⁸ This would prove to be one of the greatest challenges for him to overcome later when he had to take on the leadership role in the nation’s struggle against the white apartheid regime. “My greatest weakness was being scared!” Tutu professed in our conversation. The whites hated him, because he was speaking up for the oppressed, but the blacks opposed him, too, because he preached non-violent resistance. Caught up in the heat of the conflict, he took criticism and attack from both sides.

From his early childhood on, Desmond carried within him a strong sense of justice. This may have stemmed from his experience of his father’s repeated drunken and violent outbursts at home. When Desmond’s father was drunk, he would beat his mother. As a boy, Desmond felt a strong resentment toward him. “I wanted to protect my mother and beat him up, but I was too small,” Desmond recalled. “My father was a great man in many respects, but when he got drunk, he was awful. I wanted to hurt him like he had hurt my mother. As a boy, I was very angry with him, and it wounded my

soul. Even after I had worked through a long process of forgiveness, I still carried some residue of anger and pain when I thought back of those times,” Tutu admitted.

Desmond’s mother was the most important person in his life, and one of the people that shaped him the most. “I resemble my mother physically. I got my big nose from her, which I have to put into everything,” Tutu chuckled. “She was short and stumpy and had a big nose like I do, and I have often prayed that I might not only resemble her physically, but also in her love and compassion for others. Although she was not educated, she was an incredible human being, and she had a huge influence on my life,” Tutu reminisced.

SMALL TOKEN WITH LASTING IMPACT

Tutu vividly remembers an incident with his mother that made a deep and lasting impression on him. “I was about nine years old, and my mother was working at a blind school as a domestic worker. She took me along one day, and I saw a white priest approaching. When he passed by, he tipped his hat and said ‘madam,’ greeting my mother. I was stunned. I had never seen a white person greet my mother in respect, let alone call her *madam!*”

Just a few years later, at the age of fourteen, Desmond was diagnosed with Tuberculosis (TB). He had always been thin and frail, but this was the most serious illness of his life, and when he started coughing blood, the doctors feared he would not survive. He ended up spending long months in sterile hospital surroundings, which was extremely difficult for Desmond. He experienced intense feelings of isolation, loneliness, and despair during his 20-month treatment away from home.⁴⁹

It was during this time that the same priest he had encountered years before made a major impact on Desmond, which would mark him for the rest of his life. In our conversation he remembered, “I was hospitalized for nearly two years, and this priest visited me every week. If he couldn’t, then he sent a member of his community to visit me. Even though I didn’t know at the time that I was learning, I learned from him how you can make someone feel important!” Desmond said. “There was this important white person visiting me – a black child, a ‘non-entity’ in South Africa – every week and paying so much attention to me! This did something incredible for my self-esteem,” The priest, named Trevor Huddleston, demonstrated love in action, and he also taught Desmond another very important lesson: that not all white people were the same. Trevor Huddleston would become Desmond’s mentor, and later an important anti-apartheid figure in Britain.

During Desmond’s long hospitalization Huddleston provided him with many books, which he eagerly devoured, in order to pass his school exams. During that time, Desmond developed a great love for literature and became an avid reader. During Huddleston’s many visits to Desmond’s room, he also discussed South Africa’s problems with him openly.

Due to the inspiring example of Father Huddleston, Desmond’s faith deepened greatly during his time in hospital.⁵⁰ He also thrived academically. Even though the TB left him with his right hand partially paralyzed, he taught himself to write left-handed. Despite his long absence from school, he passed the Joint Matriculation Board Exams in 1950 and was among the 0.5 percent of black Africans who qualified for university entrance.

DETOUR OR DESTINY?

His father hoped he would follow his footsteps and go into teaching, but Desmond's dream was to become a medical doctor. He had developed a love for medicine while in the hospital, and he had a specific interest in researching TB, which had so devastated his own health. In addition, Desmond aspired to become one of the few black Africans to achieve high academic and professional goals. There was only one western-trained black African doctor in the nation, who practiced medicine in Sophiatown, and Tutu was inspired by his example.

Desmond was admitted to medical school at the University of Witwaterstrand in Johannesburg, but to his great dismay, he was unable to raise the tuition fees for this elite university. Eventually, Tutu was forced to make other plans. Career options for blacks were limited, and the most obvious choice was to become a teacher, so that was what he did. Unfortunately, that only lasted until his resignation in protest of the Bantu Education Act. The only remaining viable option for black South Africans with academic aspirations was to pursue a career in the church.

At the age of 29, Desmond started all over and began his training to become a priest in the Anglican Church at St. Peter's Theological College in Johannesburg in 1958. In describing this new path, Tutu has said that God "forced" him into his destiny. But even though the priesthood was not what he had in mind initially, it was there that he found his real passion and call in life. Of course, he had no idea of the path that would open up before him, to become the world's most famous priest and God's megaphone in the struggle for human rights and justice in South Africa.

PASSION FOR COMPASSION

By the time Tutu started re-training in the church, he and Leah were married and their first two children, Trevor and Theresa, had been born. Leah had also left the teaching profession and retrained as a nurse. Starting all over demanded a lot of sacrifices from both of them. But they stayed true to themselves and did not shy away from discomfort or inconvenience, in order to stand up for what they believed.

The problems of the apartheid system not only permeated the school system, but also seeped through infrastructure of the church. Black African ministers faced lower pay and fewer options for advancement in the white-controlled church. For example, the scholarship that Tutu received for training as a priest was lower than the standard amount designated for whites. White curates were provided with housing, but when Desmond was ordained as a curate, he and Leah, together with their three children, had to live in a garage on the outskirts of the township of their assigned parish. That garage was their main bedroom, the children's bedroom, their lounge, and dining room all rolled into one.⁵¹

Despite the difficult conditions, Tutu undertook his duties as clergyman very diligently. He visited his parishioners regularly in their even poorer township homes and listened to their concerns, their pains, and their questions. In ministering to the overwhelmingly-poor members of his congregation, Tutu developed a deep compassion and an intense passion for the priesthood. Soon after he was ordained as priest in 1961, new doors opened for him to increase his qualifications in England by studying for a Master's degree in theology.

DIGNITY RESTORED

Tutu's time in Britain was not only an important stepping-stone that eventually led him on to an international platform in the fight for justice in South Africa. It was also a time of personal reshaping and internal preparation for this future task. Desmond and Leah were astounded by their newfound freedom in Britain. It had a deep impact on him, developing his confidence and helping him shed the deeply-ingrained sense of racial inferiority. Both of them enjoyed the liberty they experienced in Britain. Desmond especially made a game of hearing people address him with respect. "When we would see a policeman, we would stop him and ask him for directions, even if we knew where we were going!" Tutu told us. "We did it just for the mere pleasure of being called *sir* or *madam* – something that was just unthinkable in South Africa! There we would have been asked for our passes and run the risk of getting arrested." This liberating experience helped him to become, as he has described it, "more fully human," and slowly freed him from his sense of inferiority as a black man.⁵²

During Tutu's time in Britain between 1962 and 1966, he led a parish that included white parishioners. Again, this new experience helped him overcome the habit of automatically deferring to whites. He developed the confidence to disagree with whites openly, and he felt freer to express his opinions than he had ever been able to in South Africa. "It was very liberating not to experience daily discrimination, and it was there that I actually realized how deeply apartheid had affected me," Tutu remembered. In another interview, he relates, "You know **the worst thing about apartheid was how it made you feel about yourself, the way it made you doubt that you are actually really a child of God.** When you are constantly subjected to discrimination, it begins to work on your mind. You start thinking,

‘Maybe they are right. **Maybe I am just a second-class human being**, maybe I am of lesser value.’”⁵³

Tutu goes on to describe how he discovered the power of language and what it can do to you. “Language does not just describe reality. Language *creates* the reality it describes. So when you are called a *non-European*, a *non-this* or *non-that*, you might think it does not affect you, but it is in fact it is very corrosive to your self-image. You end up wondering whether you are actually as human as these others.”⁵⁴ His experience in Britain helped him to overcome the effects the apartheid labeling had on his feelings about himself. Then, when back in South Africa, Tutu recognized more and more how **this sense of inferiority among black South Africans actually dehumanized them and caused them to treat each other poorly**. He also began to believe that an important part in healing the nation would be the restoration of a sense of personal dignity.

LOOKING THE BEAST IN THE EYE

But even in Tutu’s own life, the apartheid ideology had a lasting impact on his thinking, catching him by surprise when surfaced. In our conversation, he described one such instance: “One time I boarded a plane in Nigeria and then saw that both the pilot and co-pilot were black. And you know what happened: a sudden feeling of unease crept into my consciousness. I was wondering whether these two black pilots were actually capable of flying this plane!” After takeoff, the flight got a bit bumpy. “I was holding on to my seat, sweating and wondering whether we’d make it!” Tutu laughed as he painted the picture for us. Of course, he arrived at his destination safely. “It was instances like these, but in particular during the hearings of the

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), that we had to realize we were deeply wounded people.”

How do you heal a people that have been crushed under the oppression of such a dehumanizing system as apartheid? How South Africa functioned in the years after apartheid was abolished is still considered a miracle, because everyone had expected the nation to erupt into a bloodbath of retaliation. But for South Africa’s new leaders, recent events in Rwanda had been a daunting warning sign. They knew that they had to deal with their past in a different way if they wanted to avoid a similar situation.

“You have to look the beast in the eye,” Tutu insisted in a speech on truth and reconciliation. “Forgetting the past is not an option! That’s what we learned from Rwanda. It reminds me of haunting inscription at the entrance of the Dachau concentration camp museum: *‘Those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it.’* The past dealt with by silencing it does not remain the past. It refuses to lie down quietly,” Tutu continues. “Bygones don’t become bygones just by your say-so. You cannot just say ‘be gone!’ Bygones will return to haunt you – and we had just witnessed this in Rwanda: The Tutsis had done something to the Hutus a long time ago, and it seemed to be gone. But after 30 years the ghost from the past returned and the Hutus struck back with relentless rage and revenge.”⁵⁵

THE IMPORTANCE OF TRUTH

Tutu explains that when you try to silence the past, you actually re-victimize the victim. “When you say *‘let’s forget about it’* you are in essence saying to the victims that what happened in their case either didn’t happen or that it doesn’t matter. And that is very detrimental.

So we had to ask ourselves how we were going to deal with our past, and we chose a compromise: we offered amnesty to the perpetrators in exchange for truth.”⁵⁶

When Nelson Mandela became president of South Africa in 1994 and asked Desmond Tutu to chair the nation’s *Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)* to deal with the atrocities committed under apartheid, he knew that the task ahead was daunting. And in fact, the decision was met with skepticism at first, and the leaders were accused of letting people get away with murder. But as the process continued, many came to see the wisdom in it. For one thing, the act of testifying provided catharsis for many. Tutu recounts, “Sometimes victims were heard for the first time when they shared their story of personal suffering, and we have found that just in *telling the story*, people experienced a catharsis, a healing.” Tutu compares the Commission’s task with that of opening a wound and cleansing it, so that in the end the country could be healed.

In total, the TRC listened to more than 20,000 individual testimonies about the ghastly acts committed during apartheid. And Tutu insisted on hearing the stories of the “little people,” not just the big stories that had already been told. He wanted to hear from the people in little towns in faraway places, whose suffering had been ignored for so long.

During the very first hearing of the TRC, Tutu broke down crying. “It was terrible, because I cry easily,” he says. He immediately recognized that he couldn’t allow that to happen again, because “The media then concentrated on me, instead of the people who were the rightful subjects of attention. After that first hearing I was determined that if I was going to cry, I would cry at home or at church – and that’s what I did.”⁵⁷ During succeeding hearings, Tutu

would often bite his own hand when he began to feel emotional, in order not to divert the focus from the victims.

Many of the testimonies the TRC heard from victims were absolutely horrendous and heartbreaking. “We are talking about rape, torture, and genocide. We thought there was no end to the cruelty and ghastly atrocities people can come with and were willing to do to other people,”⁵⁸ Tutu reports in the documentary *Apartheid, Perpetrators and Forgiveness*. What sustained Tutu during this time – and in fact throughout his whole life – was prayer. Tutu says, “There are so many noises around us, and I personally need to seek the quiet to hear God and commune with him. I was trained as a priest in a convent, and I stuck to the regimen of early devotion. So that is something I have practiced ever since I became a priest, and it has sustained me throughout all the years.” Tutu continues, “And then there are the prayers of so many others, which have sustained me. Without the prayers that so many have offered for me, I could not have made it.”

BECOMING WOUNDED HEALERS

Even though the TRC was a political council and not a religious one, Tutu led them in prayer before each hearing, asking the Holy Spirit to bring comfort and healing to the nation. Besides revealing and acknowledging the horrible suffering of the victims, the commission also provided the perpetrators with the opportunity to make amends. Tutu recounts in one television interview, “Most of them were actually quite genuine when they asked for forgiveness from the victims. They were not required to do that, yet many of them did. And it was an incredible privilege to have been part of the whole process, to be wounded healers. **We realized this more and more during**

this period of the hearings of the TRC, that we are a wounded people, and that we are wounded healers.”⁵⁹

Contrary to what many expected, what is most remembered and valued from the TRC process is not the revelation of the ghastly acts and atrocities that were committed, but rather the incredible generosity and magnanimity of many victims to forgive. One nineteen-year-old girl named Babalwa spoke about the grief and hardship her family experienced after her father was killed by the apartheid regime. Only eight when her father was murdered, she was left to raise her three-year-old brother. “I would love to know who killed my father. So would my brother,” Babalwa said when she shared her heart-breaking story before the TRC. But what she said next astonished everyone: “We want to know, because we want to forgive - but we don’t know *who* to forgive.”⁶⁰

UNDERSTANDING FORGIVENESS

How is such forgiveness possible? The TRC heard many extraordinary stories of forgiveness, but Tutu insisted in a different interview that we all have the capacity to be extraordinary. “We might think we wouldn’t be able to do that when we hear these testimonies. But you don’t know. You don’t know how you really would react! The *capacity to forgive* is in each one of us – but it is something you actually do for yourself. By forgiving, you serve your peace of mind and spirit. Forgiveness serves your own well-being. When you are wronged, humiliated, or hurt, your blood pressure goes up and you feel it in your tum-tum. But when you forgive, your blood pressure goes down, and you are able to release anger and hatred. So forgiveness is good for you physical and your spiritual well-being. It is what

you do for your own sake.”⁶¹

In the previously-mentioned documentary on forgiveness, Tutu explains that you find freedom for yourself in the act of forgiving: “The person who has done the evil deed will face consequences, but until you are willing to forgive them, you are still tied to them. You continue to be punished by what they have done.” Tutu explains how to break the vicious cycle of unforgiveness: “By the fact that someone has wronged, hurt or abused us, we have a certain right over that person in that we could refuse to forgive. We could keep the right to retribution. But when I forgive, I jettison that right and I open the door of opportunity for the other person to make a new beginning. That is what I do when I forgive.”⁶²

The victims in South Africa experienced acts of cruelty and torture. Is it possible that these can be forgiven, and can real reconciliation actually occur between victim and this kind of perpetrator? Tutu shares his answer, “Well, as a Christian, I have to ask: is there anything that is unforgivable? I’m afraid we are following a Lord and Master who at the point of where he was tortured and crucified in the most painful way, prayed for those who tortured him, and he even found an excuse for them: ‘They do not know what they are doing.’ And we follow one who says, ‘Forgive one another as God in Christ forgave you.’ That is for us the paradigm. We might not always reach to that ideal, but that is the standard.”⁶³

The path of forgiveness is not an easy one, and depending on the severity of the harm caused, it can be a long walk to find the freedom that is released in forgiveness. Tutu does not make light of the cost of this process. “On this path we must walk through the muddy shoals of hatred and anger and make our way through grief and loss to find the acceptance that is the hallmark of forgiveness.”⁶⁴

It would be easier if there were clear steps to follow, and if the path of forgiveness was clearly marked out, but it is not. For some, granting forgiveness may happen quickly, maybe even within seconds. For others, it may take months or even years, depending on the severity of the harm. Granting forgiveness can also be more difficult when the perpetrator does not show any remorse. “Of course, it is preferable if the perpetrator asks for forgiveness,” Tutu states. But in the end, the path of forgiveness is the only path worth following, and the only way forward into healing.

FORGIVENESS IS NOT EASY

Some people, even some in Christian communities, have unknowingly adopted a Buddhist concept of forgiveness, believing that forgiveness entails letting go of the sorrow and dying to the past. But Desmond Tutu corrects this misconception in the documentary, “I doubt that you are able by an act of will to let go of the pain. The *will* part of forgiveness is where you say, *I am not going to let you victimize me and hold me in a position where I harbor resentment against you, and where I am looking for an opportunity to pay you back. I am letting go of that right.*” **In other words, forgiving does not mean forgetting the harm.** It also does not mean pretending that the injury was not as bad as it really was. “Quite the opposite is true,” Tutu states in his book. “The cycle of forgiveness can be activated and completed only with absolute truth and honesty.”⁶⁵

That’s why the TRC only granted amnesty to the perpetrators in exchange for the *truth*. It’s also the reason why they made a point of listening to the thousands of individual victims’ testimonies of personal suffering. “What we found is that people seemed to find a

great deal of healing just in being able to tell their story. I suppose in some way it was authenticating them,” Tutu once said. “And by listening to their story, it was as if we were saying ‘*We acknowledge that you are you, and that you are someone of infinite worth and value.*’”⁶⁶

The most important lesson that Tutu takes away from the TRC process is that there is no situation completely beyond redemption. He describes it in the forgiveness documentary, “**We all learned that there is no situation of which we can say, ‘This is absolutely, totally devoid of hope,’** because that is what people thought about South Africa.” He also reveals his belief that the real heroes of the commission’s work were those who might be called ordinary people. He explains, “There are no ordinary people in my theology, but it is the small people, the ones who used to be non-entities, that are the stars. It’s been an incredible privilege to listen to people who rightfully should have been consumed by anger, bitterness and revenge. When you experience their magnanimity, their willingness to forgive, it actually shows how incredibly good and generous these people are. It is not just fiction when we say we are made in the image of God – we are made for goodness. That is so incredible!”⁶⁷

PRISONER OF HOPE

Desmond Tutu believes that this capacity for good exists at the heart of every individual. For this he is often called an optimist. But he refutes that: “I’m not an optimist; **I’m simply a prisoner of hope. When you understand God’s dream and calling on our lives, you can only be amazed!** We are created in the image of God! Even the person who has done the evil deed is created in the image of God. We are in fact God-carriers!” However, he acknowledges, “We don’t

really believe this. We dismiss people who don't fit into our mold – the criminal, the beggar on the street.”

Tutu is passionate in his belief that all humans are God-carriers. “If we had the right kind of eyes we would see God there! God doesn't just say, *‘I love you,’* when you are likable. He says, *‘I love you,’* even when people see you at your worst!”⁶⁸

Tutu illustrates this idea in another interview, using the Bible's story of the good shepherd, “Most churches show us a picture of a shepherd with a lamb. But lambs don't stray! It's the grown-up sheep that strayed. The sheep that strayed is a troublesome old ram – and that's what the shepherd goes after, leaving the good sheep behind! God turns our kind of values upside down, because I would generally invest in someone who is good – but God says, *‘I will invest in one who they say is bad,’* because he knows their true identity and what they are made of! He knows their potential, their calling to be God-carriers, and he calls them back.”⁶⁹

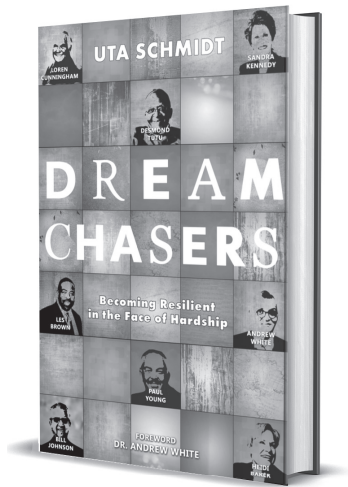
DREAM DREAMS

Because Desmond sees this potential for goodness in people, his greatest advice is to have dreams. “**Dream dreams!**” Tutu summed up his life motto in our conversation. “Don't be infected by the cynicism in this world. God wants to use you. Believe that this world can become a better place, a world where there is room for everyone, a world where you have the capacity to include all and not be shaken and scared by the successes of others!” He continues, “Dream of a world where poverty is history, where everyone knows they have a place in God's heart. Young people dream dreams, but then they grow up and forget them. Don't forget your dreams! Dream!”

Desmond Tutu is a truly humble person and a carrier of hope. His joy is contagious, and at 85, his wit and sense of humor have not diminished. When asked in our interview if he would do anything differently if he could live his life again, he said impishly, “Become an adult!” and laughed as hard as he could. But the reality is that he is an icon who has learned to keep his childlikeness while still taking on immense responsibility. Despite all challenges, struggles, and obstacles he has faced, he celebrates life. Although some of Tutu’s liberal views have not been without controversy, his theology of forgiveness and transformation leave a legacy of hope.

Tutu also focuses on the individual and truly knows how to make someone feel important. His character, compassion, integrity, and authenticity have made him an example for his people. And his message that there is no future without forgiveness motivated a whole nation to engage in a process of forgiveness and reconciliation. But what is at the root of his convictions? His own experience of forgiveness. He himself was wounded— in childhood by an alcoholic parent, during his teenage years in his battle with TB, by the unrealized dream of becoming a doctor. That was in addition to the racial oppression, personal assaults, and death threats he experienced under apartheid. But a personal journey through the process of forgiveness has transformed him.

We learn from Tutu that there is no situation totally devoid of hope. Whatever challenge, pain, loss, betrayal, grief, or obstacle you have experienced, if you walk on the path of forgiveness and reconciliation, your situation can be transformed. What was lost can be restored and redeemed in ways you cannot imagine when you take the journey to heal the wounds of the past and you yourself become a wounded healer.



DREAM CHASERS

BECOMING RESILIENT
IN THE FACE OF HARDSHIP

UTA SCHMIDT

Have you ever known the pain and disappointment of a shattered dream, a hope deferred, a vision put on hold? Maybe you started out with a dream in your heart, but it got buried beneath the rubble of life's challenges. Perhaps life took some unexpected turns and threw you off course. Know this: you are not alone.

Dream Chasers follows the lives of nine ordinary people who overcame great hardship in pursuing their God-given dreams. In doing so, they became resilient heroes of faith. As you read their stories you will be inspired and find new strength to overcome the difficulties you are facing in your own journey of following the dreams God has placed in your heart.

Endorsements:

Dream Chasers is an exploration of raw human experience, an invitation to look through the eyes of another's story and back at our own.

William Paul Young, author of *The Shack*

You can't help but be inspired as you read the stories of the trials and victories of some of my personal heroes

Bill Johnson, author and pastor of Bethel Church

If you have a dream inside of you and want to know how to make your dream a reality, you must read this book.

Les Brown, author of *Live Your Dreams*

This is a book about getting up when life knocks you down. It is a book that must be read.

Canon Andrew White, Vicar Emeritus of Baghdad

