

## READING AND DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR

# *Made for Goodness*

And Why This Makes  
All the Difference

by

Desmond Tutu and Mpho Tutu

### CHAPTER 1: THE DIFFERENCE GOODNESS MAKES

1. Even after all Desmond Tutu has seen and heard as the chairman of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, he still asserts that all people are fundamentally good. How have his experiences of apartheid and apartheid's aftermath influenced his belief? Before

reading the book, did you agree or disagree with this statement?

2. Desmond and his daughter Mpho propose that one way we can know we are fundamentally good is our outrage at wrong, which stems from an innate sense that evil is not the norm. Have you ever felt such outrage? What are some of the other ways we can know we are fundamentally good? How can recognizing ourselves as good make a difference in our lives?
3. What do the creation stories in Genesis reveal about our nature? What does it mean for us to be made not only like God, in God's image, but also for God?

## CHAPTER 2: STOP 'BEING GOOD'

1. What is the difference between goodness as the coin with which we pay for God's love and goodness as our response? How would operating under one point of view or the other affect your life? How can we live out goodness without falling prey to the demon of "being good"?

## CHAPTER 3: AN INVITATION TO WHOLENESS

1. How does the perfection or wholeness the authors describe differ from our usual idea of perfection? How does wholeness tie into the concept of *ubuntu* (or, that "a person is a person only through other persons")?

## CHAPTER 4: FREE TO CHOOSE

1. How does God demonstrate reverence for human autonomy? How does this respect for our free will affect the world? What then is God's role in helping us choose what is right and good?

## CHAPTER 5: THE HABITS OF WRONGNESS

1. The authors describe depravity entering creation not as a tsunami but as a "slow, silent leak, drip by quiet drip, until the earth is flooded," or as "a succession of uncorrected missteps" (p. 89). How does this match or differ from your own ideas about evil? What are some of the authors' suggestions for halting the progress of evil?
2. The authors mention tuning out as a habit that can allow wrong to become entrenched. What is so insidious about tuning out? How does it differ from true rest and restoration? How can we stop evil in its tracks simply by paying attention?

## CHAPTER 6: WHERE IS GOD WHEN WE SUFFER?

1. The authors suggest that God does not intervene in suffering and wickedness because God is consistent. Why does that keep God from stepping in? What does this

lack of intervention mean for our role, our responsibilities, in the world?

2. In a prayer on page 110, the authors write, “*You don’t believe that I am with you./ But I am there./ When you stop running from the pain/ And turn to face it,/ When you can step into the agony and let it be,/ When you can turn to your own suffering and know its name./ Then you will see me./ You will see me in the heart of it with you.*” What are Desmond and Mpho trying to convey about suffering here? Does the idea of God being present in your suffering comfort you? Why or why not?

#### CHAPTER 7: WHERE IS GOD WHEN WE FAIL?

1. After struggling with his failure to visit a sick parishioner before she died, Desmond discovered that “failure could be a bridge across the chasm that pride had created” (p. 114). Have you ever found that failure has brought you closer to God? If you feel comfortable, give an example.

#### CHAPTER 8: WHY DOES GOD LET US SIN?

1. Why is it so hard for us to grasp the concept of God’s love for the sinner? Why do Desmond and Mpho refer to this love as a “risky gamble”?

2. Desmond and Mpho write, “*What did you do?/ No, it cannot be undone,/ The pain cannot be unmade,/ The life cannot be un-lived,/ The time will not run backward,/ You cannot un-choose your choice./ But the pain can be healed,/ Your choices can be redeemed,/ Your life can be blessed,/ And love can bring you home*” (p. 137). What is the difference between our actions being undone and the pain being healed? When has God’s love brought you home from a crippling sin?

## CHAPTER 9: GOING HOME TO GOODNESS

1. Desmond writes of having trouble forgiving himself for not taking time to talk to his father the night his father died, even though he knew God had forgiven him. “I almost feel annoyed with God. ‘How can God forgive me? God just doesn’t understand. These things are serious!’ ‘I know better than God!’ says my unforgiving, arrogant heart. . . . I am surprised and annoyed that Jesus is welcoming a sinner. I am especially surprised because that sinner is me” (p. 141). If goodness is our home, why do we find it so hard to return to it when we have inflicted harm or been harmed ourselves?
2. What have Desmond’s experiences with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission taught him about healing and wholeness? How is forgiving a profound form of remembering and reclaiming? How does reconciliation take us back to the Garden of Eden? When in your life have you experienced Eden?

## CHAPTER 10: HEARING GOD'S VOICE

1. Desmond writes that he prepares for prayer by choosing a setting—either a special place or a special item such as a cross or icon—and a particular time. He describes his prayer itself as just being with God, of holding people and situations before God, rather than offering God prescriptions. Mpho prepares herself with a breathing exercise using the words “Be still and know that I am God.” How do both of these practices connect to or differ from your own prayer practice?
2. Desmond describes the “God-pressure” of being compelled to lead a march. When have you felt this sort of God-pressure? Did you attend to it? What happened in an instance when you attended to it? What happened in an instance when you did not? How did you feel?
3. What are some ways we can listen for God’s voice? Conversely, what are some habits that make us tone-deaf?

## CHAPTER 11: SEEING WITH GOD'S EYES

1. How does accepting ourselves help us to choose goodness?
2. How does the way God views us differ from the way we see ourselves? How would viewing ourselves and others with God’s eyes change us and the world?

3. After finishing the book, how has your opinion of goodness changed? Do you believe that all humans were, in fact, “made for goodness”? If your belief has shifted in any way, what impact does the shift have on how you understand or examine your assumptions about people and situations in your personal life, your community or the world? What can you take away to use in your own life to bring about greater goodness and healing in the world?