

# ROADMAP

**OF PEACE:** The Power of Repentance  
and Restoration in Conflicts Resolution.



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# **ROADMAP OF PEACE: THE POWER OF REPENTANCE AND RESTORATION IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION.**

Forging Paths to Harmony and Healing

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# CONTESTS

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### UNRAVELLING THE DILEMMA:

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# ROADMAP OF PEACE: THE POWER OF REPENTANCE AND RESTORATION IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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## ABSTRACT

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*The goal of justice and fairness often takes centre stage in debates about conflict resolution, which is a complex process. The tremendous impact of repentance and restoration, however, is frequently missed in the middle of this emphasis. The goal of this study is to shed light on the transformative potential that these concepts have when given priority in organizational contexts. It explores the complex dynamics of incorporating repentance and restoration into the structure of conflict resolution procedures by looking at actual situations and relying on theoretical understanding. Through an exploration of case studies and theoretical frameworks, this research elucidates how prioritizing repentance and restoration can lead to more sustainable peace. It highlights the nuanced interplay between empathy, compassion, and reconciliation, emphasizing their pivotal role in resolving conflicts at a deeper level. By embracing these principles, organizations can navigate disputes with greater understanding and empathy, facilitating more holistic resolutions that address underlying tensions and grievances. Furthermore, this study calls for a paradigm shift in conflict resolution processes, pushing stakeholders to acknowledge the transforming power of repentance and restoration. Organizations can promote healing, re-establish trust, and eventually clear the path for lasting harmony by taking a more compassionate and empathic position. Considering reconciliation's ability to spark constructive change and foster long-lasting peace within organizational contexts, this research emphasizes the significance of accepting restoration as the cornerstone of conflict resolution initiatives.*

## KEY WORDS:

Conflict resolution, repentance, restoration, dispute resolution, organizational settings, transformative impact, reconciliation, empathy, compassion, sustainable peace, justice, fairness, holistic resolutions, transformative potential, paradigm shift, empathetic approach, reconciliation processes, conflict management, transformative justice, healing, understanding.

## INTRODUCTION

When Paul sent Joseph of Arimathea to England, he founded the first church at Glastonbury. Unfortunately, today, that same locale is the seedbed for a rejection of Christianity and a search for transformative values. This can be the source of conflicts

in society when religious institutions or a communities try to operate outside the true nature of their designs. In the nineteenth century, religion shaped the fundamental worldview of Western culture. However, it wasn't that religion ceased to be present in



the culture; rather, it ceased to have a shaping effect on it. People didn't stop believing in God, but this belief ceased to have much practical effect on life. We've seen that religion has been a part of conflicts within society. Repentance leads people to sacrifice their interests for the benefit of others, and restoration brings happiness knowing that you're on good terms with your brothers and sisters. This 'Roadmap of Peace' presents two valuable terminologies that should be used in any conflict resolution: healing communities produce healing generations. We must aim to create a healing society, one that believes everyone is made in the real image of God. When you mistreat your brothers and sisters, you're mistreating the image of God. We've witnessed significant failures of religious institutions in the Western world, where they've lost credibility and sometimes become part of the problems. As a result, people have sought alternatives to reshape their beliefs.

The case study suggests that the roadmap for peace in the Middle East should be anchored in the principles of repentance and restoration. These principles are deemed crucial for achieving genuine and lasting peace in the region, especially concerning the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Repentance entails acknowledging past wrongs and committing to rectify them,

while restoration focuses on reconciliation and rebuilding trust among conflicting parties. By prioritizing these principles in the peace process, stakeholders can address the root causes of the conflict and pave the way for a future defined by harmony, justice, and coexistence. Given that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most protracted and contentious conflicts in modern history, with deep-seated grievances on both sides, embracing these principles becomes even more imperative. Decades of violence, displacement, and failed peace proposals have left severe scars on the collective conscience of both Israelis and Palestinians. In this complex and varied struggle, finding a way to peace takes more than simply political conversations and security measures. It necessitates a fundamental transformation in mindset and strategy, one that recognizes the humanity and dignity of all parties involved.

Repentance is a key principle that can help break the cycle of violence and mistrust that has characterized the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It involves a sincere acknowledgment of past wrongs and a genuine commitment to rectify them. For Israelis, this may mean acknowledging the dispossession and displacement of Palestinians during the creation of the state of Israel and the ongoing occupation of Palestinian territories. For Palestinians, it

may involve recognizing the suffering and trauma experienced by Jewish communities throughout history, including the Holocaust. By acknowledging these past wrongs and committing to redress them, both sides can begin to build a foundation of trust and understanding. Restoration is equally important in the pursuit of peace. It involves the process of reconciliation and rebuilding relationships that have been damaged by conflict. This can take many forms, including dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian leaders, grassroots peace-building initiatives, and efforts to promote mutual understanding and coexistence. One example of restoration in action is the work of organizations such as the Parents Circle-Families Forum, which brings together Israelis and Palestinians who have lost loved ones to the conflict to foster reconciliation and promote peace.

By entering the roadmap for peace around the principles of repentance and restoration, stakeholders can address the underlying causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and work towards a just and lasting resolution. This approach recognizes that peace cannot be imposed from the outside but must be built from the ground up through genuine dialogue, mutual respect, and a commitment to justice. It also acknowledges that achieving peace will require difficult compromises and painful

sacrifices on both sides. However, the alternative – continued violence, suffering, and division – is simply not sustainable. In the realm of resolving conflicts, the roadmap to peace often appears elusive and complex. There is a beacon of hope: the transformative potential of repentance and restoration. These principles, rooted in humility, accountability, and reconciliation, offer a pathway towards genuine healing and enduring harmony. Through this case study will explore the profound impact of repentance and restoration in conflict resolution, illustrating how they can transcend entrenched hostilities and lay the groundwork for sustainable peace. Repentance, as a courageous act, involves acknowledging past wrongs and assuming responsibility for them. It necessitates individuals and communities to confront their actions with humility and accountability, leading to genuine remorse and a commitment to change. By recognizing past injustices, repentance becomes a catalyst for reconciliation, fostering understanding and empathy between conflicting parties. Repentance also plays a vital role in breaking down barriers of resentment and animosity. When parties involved in conflicts admit their mistakes and express sincere remorse, it creates opportunities for healing and forgiveness. Moreover, repentance contributes to rebuilding trust, which is

often fractured in the aftermath of conflict. By demonstrating a genuine desire to change, parties can start rebuilding trust and fostering reconciliation. Complementing repentance is the principle of restoration, which focuses on rebuilding trust and relationships damaged by conflict. Restoration entails tangible actions aimed at addressing the root causes of discord and fostering collaboration and coexistence. Through restoration efforts, communities can heal from the wounds of division and find strength in unity and shared purpose. Restoration encompasses various activities, including economic development initiatives and cultural exchange programs. These endeavours aim to address underlying grievances and create opportunities for collaboration and mutual understanding. By investing in restoration, stakeholders can create an environment conducive to sustainable peace.

Furthermore, restoration serves as a bridge between conflicting parties, facilitating dialogue and cooperation. Engaging in joint initiatives aimed at addressing common challenges allows parties to develop a sense of common purpose and forge meaningful connections. This collaborative approach not only fosters reconciliation but also lays the groundwork for long-term cooperation and coexistence. Repentance and restoration provide a roadmap for healing the scars of conflict and paving paths to harmony. They challenge entrenched narratives of animosity and revenge, envisioning a future characterized by mutual respect and dignity. By centering the peace process around these principles, stakeholders can transcend the cycles of violence and build a foundation for sustainable peace.

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## UNRAVELLING THE DILEMMA:

### CHALLENGES IN EFFECTIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

We often discuss how to resolve disputes, but the problem arises when most of these disputes are settled improperly. Despite numerous conflicts in various contexts, satisfactory solutions are rarely reached. Instead of learning to become problem-

solvers, many individuals perpetuate issues for themselves and others while attempting to resolve disagreements. This case study reveals numerous missteps in the dispute resolution process, including the use of incorrect terminology. Parties involved



seldom reach conclusive agreements, and even when they do, the outcomes are often ineffective. The real challenge lies not in determining the extent of justice to be implemented, but rather in ensuring active participation from all parties involved. Despite numerous mistakes in conflict resolution, these errors persist as accepted norms. People struggle because they believe that individual actions can significantly alter their lives, often entering confrontations without considering crucial factors. In leadership, many disputes remain unresolved because individuals attempt to apply fairness, which often leads to the perpetuation of conflicts and the onset of enmity. What one person perceives as fair may differ from another's perspective. While fairness is desirable, there is no universally accepted standard for it. Fairness alone cannot serve as a basis for dispute resolution; instead, resolution processes should encompass repentance and restoration from both sides.

Civil conflicts have left deep scars within our communities, especially across the African continent, impeding its forward trajectory. The dynamics of power-sharing, coupled with the self-serving attitudes of leaders and rampant greed, have fuelled a cycle of devastation, endangering the very fabric of our societies. While there are concerted efforts towards reconciliation

and recovery, it's imperative to acknowledge that the healing process begins at an individual level. To truly mend our communities, we must prioritize the resolution of conflicts, transcending personal and political ambitions for the collective well-being. The sight of those we are meant to serve turning against each other is a poignant reminder of our failure as leaders. Embracing repentance and facilitating restoration efforts stand as potent weapons in our quest to permanently quell civil unrest and foster a harmonious existence. It's a sobering truth that there exists no glory in the ravages of war, whether it be conventional conflicts or guerrilla warfare. What resonates most profoundly within our communities is the yearning for enduring peace. Yet, achieving and sustaining such peace hinges upon the emotional and psychological healing of our leaders. The realization of institutional reforms, the meticulous process of post-war reconstruction, and the advancement of early-stage economic development all hinge on the well-being of those at the helm. As the poignant adage suggests, unresolved trauma only begets further pain, perpetuating a cycle of suffering onto subsequent generations. Therefore, let us ardently pursue the attainment of lasting peace, recognizing that the future prosperity of our communities' rests upon our collective commitment to healing and

reconciliation. Absolutely, the role of international donors in conflict-affected regions presents a complex landscape fraught with challenges. While aid is crucial in providing essential support to populations enduring the ravages of war, it's essential to recognize that the efficacy of such assistance can sometimes be hindered by various factors. One notable challenge lies in ensuring that aid efforts align with the genuine needs of the affected communities rather than being dictated solely by donor agendas. In some instances, the conditions attached to aid packages may not necessarily address the root causes of conflict or contribute meaningfully to its resolution. This can lead to a disconnect between the intended outcomes of aid interventions and the realities on the ground. The politicization of aid can further complicate matters. Donor countries or organizations may be compelled to prioritize their geopolitical interests or strategic objectives over the genuine needs of the affected populations. This can undermine the credibility and effectiveness of aid efforts, perpetuating a cycle of dependency rather than fostering sustainable development and peace. Furthermore, navigating the complexities of conflict-affected environments requires donors to carefully navigate delicate political dynamics and build trust among stakeholders. Building consensus and

fostering inclusive processes are essential for ensuring that aid efforts are perceived as legitimate and impartial by all parties involved. Ultimately, while international donors play a vital role in providing much-needed assistance to conflict-affected regions, it's essential for them to approach their interventions with humility, sensitivity, and a genuine commitment to addressing the underlying causes of conflict. Only by doing so can they truly contribute to long-term peace, stability, and development in these troubled areas.

In the ebb and flow of a country's history, no matter how successful its institutions and policies may seem at one point, they cannot expect perpetual stability without the rotation of leadership. Without change at the helm, unresolved issues inevitably resurface, potentially plunging societies into turmoil. It's been wisely said that if virtuous individuals shy away from leadership roles, the vacuum may be filled by those with malicious intent. When leaders lack moral fiber, governance can descend into a state where the very fabric of humanity is torn, with laws dictated by criminals and the virtuous left as victims. This reality breeds a chilling discord between governments and their people. What's needed is a leadership imbued with a spirit of healing, a concept not confined to religious doctrine but essential for societal

well-being. True healing, we believe, begins with acknowledgment, repentance, and the restoration of those who have strayed. Only through this process can we hope to achieve lasting peace—a peace not enforced by might but nurtured by reconciliation and transformation. The grim statistics further underscore the urgency of this matter. From 1946 to 2001, the world witnessed over 220 armed conflicts, with half erupting after the end of the Cold War. Among these were more than 140 civil wars, resulting in a staggering toll of 20 million casualties and displacing 67 million individuals. These figures, reminiscent of the darkest chapters of European history, are but a fraction of the human suffering witnessed today. Contemporary conflicts, fuelled by a complex interplay of interstate rivalries, internal strife, and international

interventions, have ravaged nations like Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In confronting this sobering reality, we must recognize that genuine healing in leadership is not a luxury but a necessity. It is the cornerstone upon which we can build a future where peace is not merely an aspiration but a tangible reality for all.

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### Box 1.1. Defining Repentance and Restoration

**Repentance**, derived from the Greek word "Metanoeo," signifies a change in mindset or thinking. Similarly, **restoration** involves rejuvenation and returning something to its original state. *For effective dispute resolution in leadership, a change in mindset (repentance) followed by restoration are essential prerequisites.*

## ADDRESSING CORE ISSUES

Conflicts are inherently contentious, demanding, and draining. Leaders must always be able to resolve disputes in a sound manner whenever there is a

controversy. Everyone should become skilled in conflict resolution because disagreements cannot be ignored. Conflicts must be resolved to re-establish ties with



your fellow workers or people who are under you. Unresolved conflicts can lead to serious issues, strained relationships, and animosity. To prevent conflicts and drama in our society, we must get involved. Though other people will say you don't need to involve yourself in such issues as a leader but should not be taken into consideration because of participation in conflicts resolutions as leaders make us become strong leaders. The case study also discovered the basic issue that any leader must be a diplomatic person because diplomacy is the art of dealing with people in a sensitive and effective way. It is the ability to avoid offending others or hurting their feelings, especially in situations where that ability is a must. This suggests smoothness and skill in handling others in such a way as to attain one's own ends and yet avoid any unpleasantness or opposition. Leaders are called to bring peace to this world rather than to be the definition of a problem for the world. Making peace in this world can only be accomplished through true diplomacy. Therefore, we must actively contribute to fostering peace in our neighbourhoods. Conflicts need to be settled. God does not wish for us to allow disagreements, fights, and confrontations to persist and worsen. The Bible provides us with numerous examples of biblical conflict resolution. By fixing our damaged brothers and sisters, Jesus showed us how to

overcome conflicts. According to the Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them." Additionally, Jesus assigns us the task of spreading the gospel of peace. Our God is a good God who does not want us to be in conflict. He cares deeply about resolving disputes, which is why He went to tremendous efforts to make peace with us by means of His Son. Sin has caused every person's relationship with God to be strained ever since Man fell. Isaiah 59:2 says, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you so that he will not hear." We must put our confidence in Jesus Christ to mend the connection (Romans 5:10). We receive forgiveness of sin, eternal life, and a new relationship with the Father, when we put our faith in Jesus, conflict resolution can be very beneficial if done properly. Believers should make every effort to resolve any conflicts they encounter. If the offense is minor or not too serious, the Bible instructs us in Proverbs 19:11 to ignore it. In other words, you must forgive those who have hurt you and not harbour ill will toward them. This type of conflict resolution involves choosing to ignore the minor transgression and refraining from

bringing it up with the other person ever again. It is biblical to employ this method of resolving disputes, but it should only be applied to less serious transgressions. Conflict is an unavoidable occurrence in relationships. However, when handled according to biblical principles, conflict can be an opportunity for spiritual and interpersonal growth, as well as a catalyst for change. The rationale, according to Ken Sande, is clear. Sande asserts that "many believers and their churches have not yet developed the capacity to respond to conflict in a gospel-centred and biblically true manner." Christians who practice peace-making can view conflict as an opportunity to deepen bonds with others and bear witness to the love and authority of Jesus Christ through their actions. Sande states, "Peacemakers are people who breathe grace. They continually draw on the goodness and power of Jesus Christ, bringing his love, mercy, forgiveness, strength, and wisdom to the conflicts of daily life." While not everyone is called to teach a Bible study, sing in the choir, or work with youth, all of us are called to go and be reconciled to our brothers and sisters, friends and family, and the people in our churches and community. God calls us to be biblical peacemakers, allowing His redemptive, transforming love to overflow into our relationships. God created us for relationships, firmly grounded in His Word.

Avoid letting unresolved disputes deprive you of the happiness that positive connections can bring. Then, "go and be reconciled" to your brother, sister, friend, and family members (Matthew 5:24 NIV). The church, by virtue of its divine mandate, is to make disciples of Christ to all nations (Matthew 28:19), meaning to bring redemption and hope to society at large. As the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:3-14), the church should live up to the expectation of maintaining an impeccable and inspiring witness. Believers, as peacemakers (Matthew 5), must not only promote peace and conflict resolution but, more importantly, maintain peace within the church itself. Leaders of churches are perceived as distinguished members of the communities they serve. People in need of any kind of assistance and those in conflict usually turn to the church for solace and solutions. Some conflicts are natural and beneficial. Christians believe that God created people as unique individuals, with different opinions, convictions, desires, perspectives, and priorities. When handled properly, disagreements in these areas can stimulate productive dialogue, encourage creativity, and promote helpful change and growth. It must be stated at this point that regardless of the disagreement's duration, believers should refrain from taking each other to court (1 Corinthians 4:3,6; 6:6). The

increase in knowledge and general levels of education has given rise to differing perceptions and viewpoints among leadership, contributing to the rise of conflicts. Therefore, to resolve conflicts, we must discover solutions and ensure lessons are learned to prevent future occurrences. We understand that sources of

conflict can be diverse and complex, stemming from a violation of shared expectations or a clash of fundamentally different sets of behavioural expectations. Hence, when dealing with conflicts, we must understand that fairness is not always the primary goal; rather, two-sided repentance and restoration are essential.

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## **PATHWAYS TO PEACE: EMBRACING REPENTANCE AND RESTORATION**

Leaders must prioritize repentance and restoration in conflict resolution processes. The word "repentance" is derived from the Greek word *Metanoeo*, which means a change of mind or thinking. Every conflict within the community presents the leader with a great teaching opportunity because it underscores the need for Christ. The true source of all conflicts lies in the heart, with its cravings and dominant desires fuelling anger, slander, and violent reactions. Conflict resolution requires a careful understanding and practice of repentance. Genuine confession of sin is proven by thorough repentance, which involves a complete change of mind leading to a change of life. God desires full reconciliation, not just mere peace (Matthew 5:23-26; cf. Romans 12:15-21). The word "repent" essentially means to turn or change, best illustrated by someone

walking one way but then doing a "180" and heading in the opposite direction. Repentance is a necessary component of genuine conversion (Luke 3:3; II Cor.7:10). Unsaved people must turn from sin, which is the state of self-rule they have lived in as their own lord and master (Rom.10:9; I John 3:4). Repentance also remains continually necessary after conversion (Psalm 51; Luke 17:3-4). Saved persons must turn from sins, which are the specific symptoms of the lingering disease called "the flesh" (Rom.7:14-25; Galatians 5:16-17). All true human repentance involves turning from the state or occurrence of sin and turning to God for forgiveness and renewal. Scripture often mentions false repentance that does not actually bring forgiveness (e.g., Matt.3:7-8; II Cor.7:10b). Therefore, it is essential to understand the elements, effects, and examples of



repentance to practice it ourselves and help others do so as well. Repentance is an attitude of the heart, accompanied by deeds, that should permeate a believer's entire life rather than just being a component of transformation. Despite being biblical, this fact is not always at the forefront of our minds. However, a change of heart and mind is one of the most challenging aspects of conflict resolution. While people may agree to meet and address their disagreements, what often causes many problems is the reluctance to shift their hearts and thoughts. Conflicts persist because many refuse to change their hearts and minds, allowing conflicts to progress through various stages. To improve society's quality of life, we must take conflict resolution more seriously. We cannot simply flee to another planet after causing havoc and destruction on this one. It's our responsibility to address the issues within our societies; otherwise, we risk leaving behind a legacy of turmoil for future generations. Therefore, our goal should be to initiate change while inspiring others to do the same. For instance, in South Sudan, this case study examines how a conflict resolution strategy was employed to resolve the conflict between the President and Vice President. The political struggle between Kiir and Machar led to Machar's removal as vice president. The conflict escalated when soldiers from the

Nuer ethnic group, supporting Machar, clashed with soldiers from the Dinka ethnic group, aligned with Kiir. This violence quickly spread to other states when Kiir accused Machar of attempting a coup. Although efforts were made to resolve their differences, including the threat of international sanctions and numerous rounds of negotiations mediated by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Kiir and Machar finally signed a peace accord in August 2015. Machar returned to Juba in April 2016 after more than two years abroad and was re-sworn in as vice president, marking the first step towards ending the civil war. However, clashes between government forces and opposition groups soon erupted, leading to the forced displacement of tens of thousands of civilians. Machar fled the country and was eventually captured in South Africa. Despite several cease-fires arranged between the two parties and other factions in 2017 and 2018, they were repeatedly violated. In June 2018, Kiir and Machar participated in negotiations mediated by Uganda and Sudan after nearly five years of civil conflict. The Khartoum Declaration of Agreement, signed later that month, included a cease-fire and a commitment to discuss a power-sharing arrangement. A permanent cease-fire and power-sharing deal were reached in August 2018, despite intermittent violations.

Subsequently, the government, Machar's opposition party, and other rebel forces signed a peace accord, known as the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan, to end the civil war. Machar was reinstated as vice president as part of the agreement, and he visited South Sudan in late October 2018 for a national peace celebration marking the end of the civil conflict. However, reports of ongoing assaults and violations, coupled with the failure of previous peace agreements, raise concerns about the durability of the fragile truce.

The core issue lies not in power-sharing or establishing a coalition government, but in the need for repentance and a change of hearts and minds. Without transformed hearts and minds, signing multiple agreements will not bring peace to their communities. Peace must originate within their hearts before manifesting in their actions and decisions. International organizations should prioritize repentance as a means to foster social harmony and address conflicts. Developing the necessary skills to contribute positively to society is essential. In the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the government in Kinshasa attributes the nation's war to factors such as the conflict between the government and M23 rebels, as well as involvement from Rwanda. However,

instead of placing blame, it's crucial for leaders to take responsibility and engage in constructive dialogue. If allegations are valid, the DRC government should initiate discussions with Rwanda to address the issues collaboratively. As Africans, we must unite and proactively seek solutions to our challenges rather than relying on others. Failure to prioritize repentance in leadership can lead to ineffective governance and perpetuate bitterness and conflict. Leaders must incorporate repentance into their leadership to bring about meaningful change and avoid repeating mistakes of the past. Otherwise, the cycle of ineffective leadership may continue, potentially leading to the rise of detrimental figures in leadership roles. The ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia serves as a poignant reminder of the urgent need for repentance and reconciliation in our world today. The turmoil in these nations not only affects the individuals directly involved but also has far-reaching consequences for families, communities, and the global community at large. Despite sharing historical and cultural ties, the trajectory of their allegiance and military commitments diverged following Ukraine's declaration of independence in 1991. However, amidst the political tensions and military manoeuvres, it's essential to remember the shared humanity and brotherhood that binds all

people, regardless of nationality or ideology. The division between Ukraine and Russia should not overshadow their common heritage and spiritual connections. Instead, it underscores the imperative for peace and understanding, transcending geopolitical boundaries. War, with its devastation and suffering, offers no lasting solutions to the underlying grievances and conflicts between nations. Instead, it perpetuates a cycle of violence and animosity, deepening divisions and breeding further resentment. In contrast, the path to true reconciliation lies in fostering empathy, dialogue, and mutual respect. Embracing the principles of repentance and reconciliation can be transformative in resolving conflicts and building enduring peace. By acknowledging past wrongs, seeking forgiveness, and committing to positive change, individuals and nations can lay the groundwork for healing and restoration. It's a process that requires courage, humility, and a willingness to listen and empathize with one another's perspectives. Whether in personal relationships, professional settings, or international diplomacy, the practice of repentance and reconciliation offers a path forward towards greater understanding, cooperation, and harmony. By addressing conflicts constructively and compassionately, we can bridge divides, build trust, and create a more peaceful

world for future generations. Conflict arises from both major and minor differences. Whenever there is a divergence between two individuals' ideals, motivations, perceptions, thoughts, or desires, conflict can emerge. While these distinctions may sometimes seem insignificant, they can evoke strong emotions, often stemming from deep-seated emotional needs. These needs may include a desire for increased closeness and intimacy, as well as the need to feel safe, respected, and valued. The long-term success of a relationship is significantly influenced by the fulfilment of these needs on both sides. Therefore, it is essential to acknowledge and address each other's needs with respect and consideration. Failure to recognize the diverse needs in intimate relationships can result in distance, conflicts, and even breakups. Similarly, differing needs in the workplace can lead to broken promises, reduced productivity, and job losses. Therefore, it is crucial to foster an understanding of each other's perspectives and work towards finding mutually beneficial solutions to conflicts. By doing so, we can promote healthier relationships and more productive work environments.

### ***Do you fear conflict, or do you try to avoid it at all costs?***

If your perception of conflict is based on traumatic experiences from your childhood or previous toxic relationships, you may



assume that every argument will end badly. You might perceive disagreement as humiliating, disheartening, or even terrifying. If your early experiences left you feeling helpless or out of control, conflict might even be traumatic for you. Physical manifestations of conflict anxiety are possible. Feeling intimidated can make it challenging to approach a conflict situation productively. You're more likely to shut down or lose control in a fit of rage. Conflict can trigger hurt feelings, disappointment, and discomfort, as it stirs up powerful emotions. When handled unhealthily, it can lead to irreparable rifts, resentments, and breakups. But when conflict is handled well, it improves mutual understanding, fosters trust, and enhances relationships. If you are emotionally disconnected from yourself or under significant stress, you may struggle to recognize your own needs and articulate your concerns to others. For instance, instead of addressing the underlying issue, couples often argue about trivial matters like how she hangs the towels or how he slurps his soup. When a conflict becomes person-focused rather than task-focused, things might go wrong. This shift is evident when someone begins blaming others or putting the other person they are at odds with on the defensive, assigning negative traits to them. Phrases like "You don't listen," "You constantly...", and "Can't you

understand/think" often signal unhealthy conflict behaviour. Understanding conflict, becoming accustomed to it, and managing it in a way that keeps it apart from your ingrained prejudices are prerequisites for finding conflict resolutions. Conflict resolution does not come easily. Sometimes it calls for a time-out, allowing your adrenaline and cortisol levels to drop, and coming back to the problem later. And when you do get conflict resolution right, make sure you reflect on the process, celebrate it, and bank it for the next time you're faced with a conflict situation.

***Also, the term "restoration" means rejuvenation, returning something back to its original state, etc. When problems are resolved, many people don't change at all.***

Any resolution to a dispute should focus on restoring your brothers and sisters. Since the conclusion of the Cold War, there has been an increase in the number of apologies and gestures of forgiveness around the world. The battle more accurately captures the philosophy and methods of the new century. The ability to restore as a conflict resolution tool has helped people come to grips with their unpleasant pasts, modifying the rules that govern the power dynamics between brothers and sisters. However, many realists would find it challenging to agree on the application of ideas and beliefs that are consistently important in the

personal and spiritual domain of politics. Restoration helps in the representation of the personal, private, and spiritual. Restorative justice approaches, such as criminal justice reforms and victim-offender mediation, sometimes rely on aboriginal justice. Some even consider this an opportunity for social healing and national self-reflection. In other words, resolutions that were previously dismissed as ineffective in the field of conflict resolution during the technical phase of rational problem-solving have now emerged as significant issues. So, conflict resolution must deal with restoration that can help resolve their disagreements, often emanating from mutually incompatible goals. Such disagreements entail not only fights but also negative emotions that persist. The resolution of conflicts through various rational strategies such as negotiations, mediation, and facilitation might yield positive outcomes, but conflict resolution focused solely on the issues that give rise to conflict cannot often address the rupture in human relations that takes place. Failure to deal with this rupture might increase the likelihood of future conflict.

Hence, restoration can play a role in conflict resolution when the parties accept that the conflict is a relational phenomenon and is the result of failed interaction, that both sides have a role in reconstructing the

relationships, and in so doing, reconstructing their identities, which results in the restoration of the humanity of both. Religion is a dominant and complex factor in world affairs. It can be a powerful driver of violent conflict, stoking prejudice, legitimating violence, and mobilizing communities into war. However, religious ideas, actors, and institutions also serve as incredible resources and motivation for peacebuilding, inspiring people to courageous and transformative acts of peace. Positive Peace represents an ambitious and forward-looking conceptualization of peace that moves beyond conflict and violence. Well-developed Positive Peace represents the capacity for a society to thrive. It creates better economic and societal outcomes as well as lessens the number of grievances and the levels of violence associated with them. Positive Peace is empirically derived through quantitative analysis. There are few known empirical and quantitative frameworks available to analyse Positive Peace. Historically, it has largely been understood qualitatively and based on idealistic concepts of a peaceful society. Instead, the Positive Peace framework is based on the quantitatively identifiable common characteristics of the world's most peaceful countries. An important aspect of this approach is to avoid value judgment and allow statistical analysis to explain the

key drivers of peace. Conflict resolution provides the opportunity to negotiate or renegotiate to improve mutual outcomes, and as such can be constructive, provided it is nonviolent. Human beings encounter conflict regularly – whether at home, at work, among friends, or on a more systemic level between ethnic, religious, or political groups. But most of these conflicts do not result in violence. Positive Peace can instruct us to build and reinforce the attitudes, institutions, and structures that either pre-empt conflict or help societies channel disagreements productively. Most of the time, individuals and groups can resolve their differences without resorting to violence. There are aspects of society that enable this, such as attitudes that discourage violence or legal structures designed to reconcile grievances. The Positive Peace framework draws out the aspects of societies that prevent these breakdowns, based on their statistical association with the absence of violence.

Early post-Second World War peace models were more frequently based on visionary plans, in which bringing up unpleasant memories of the past is discouraged. Restoration helps in beginning in the present and imagining the future. The future is the goal, while the present is viewed as a tool for moving forward. Restoration connects itself equally

to the past and the present while constantly keeping an eye on the future. Most of the literature on conflict resolution likewise emphasized nonviolent methods for resolving disputes rather than violence as a primary means of settlement. This case study is aware that if the fundamental problems are resolved and you can restore your brother or sister back to health, recollections of past injuries are typically assumed to disappear. It is now generally accepted that communities that have suffered from major acts of violence, whether they come from other identity groups or an ethnically divided state, cannot establish lasting peace without a social healing process. And the restoration process is inextricably connected to the social healing process. Without repentance and restoration in our society's conflicts, social healing might be a major issue or never occur.

### **Transformative Oversight: Embracing Repentance and Restoration**

The problems occurring in our communities cannot be resolved solely by worldwide apology campaigns. True resolution requires a fundamental change in our hearts and minds, with repentance and restoration at the forefront. Every culture faces various issues that lead to discord among its people.

It's essential to address these underlying problems to foster harmony and unity in the future. The world needs collective efforts to create solutions that address the cultural challenges we face. In African countries, many cultures are undergoing the healing process. It's crucial to remember that forgiveness is accompanied by contrition. Societies may experience various forms of conflict if leaders and individuals fail to cooperate or take action to restore harmony among their people. Hatred and the pursuit of vengeance can consume individuals, hindering the possibility of reconciliation, transformation, and a shared future. Healing in our communities involves encouraging repentance and restoration for wrongful acts, offenders' willingness to acknowledge their wrongs, persistent efforts to recall immoral behaviour, hope for repairing relationships, exercising patience, refraining from retaliation, and cultivating empathy for those who have caused harm. Unfortunately, many civilizations have struggled to address these issues effectively.

In navigating such a healing process, many civilizations are enduring devastating losses. Traditional diplomats and political leaders face significant challenges in promoting peace due to the deep scars of history and a pervasive sense of injustice. In conflict resolution, there has been a

predominant focus on reaching seemingly win-win agreements, often neglecting the restoration of relationships. Engaging in conflict resolution entails delving into the internal world of individuals—their understandings, anxieties, hopes, perceptions, and interpretations of relationships. It is not merely about superficial solutions but about addressing fundamental issues. Relationships play a crucial role in peacebuilding as they provide the context in which cycles of violence occur and offer a pathway to transcend them. They invite individuals into moments of moral imagination, where the recognition of our interconnectedness underscores the importance of fostering the well-being of others.

Additionally, according to Lederach, humility is a virtue that comes with experience. For him, it is especially important that we strike a balance between issues like truth (past), justice (current), and the future (mercy and peace). Technical dispute resolution cannot attain this equilibrium, but repentance and restoration, in this case study's opinion, can. In criminal justice, although punishment for past wrongs may be important to take place, acknowledgment of guilt, naming, and shaming others who abused their fellow beings can contain a form of justice. However, according to my view, it is never

the case and can continue to create a bitter society by creating a lot of enemies. Yes, every wronged person or community's initial reaction is that the offender should be punished for the offense, but we must seek and involve ourselves in restoring our brothers and sisters. Punishment is not always the best solution. According to Mahmood Mamdani, suggested that restorative justice is a means to address the problem through measures such as truth recovery, reparation, restitution, and so on, becomes important. Religious feelings can sometimes be the source of disagreements. However, religious people must serve as peacemakers in our cultures. The rise of extremism, hate speeches and campaigns, and the instigation of religious discrimination and violence; prejudice, fear, and hatred caused by ignorance, misperception, stereotyping, the negative impact of traditional and social media, simplification and generalization, and communal pressure; the misuse of religion by certain religious, political, and other interest groups and individuals; socio-economic dimensions of conflict; and spill-over effects across the region have caused many of our societies not to be better places. Faith has influence. It changes lives and enables people to live at peace with each other. When we have faith in God and our leadership relies on divine guidance, we can come together at the conference table to

resolve conflicts and bring peace to our country. This approach is effective when it takes root in the hearts and minds of ordinary people. Peace is paradoxical. Many traditions extol its virtues while condemning conflict and war. Yet, in times of war, even ordinary individuals can become heroes, displaying remarkable courage. Conversely, those who take risks for peace are often met with resistance or even assassination. Pursuing peace may sometimes feel like a betrayal, as it requires compromise and entails risks. However, maintaining peace is essential for preserving our identity and national integrity.

It is crucial for spiritual leaders to advocate for openness and dialogue on matters that are crucial for maintaining peace in our countries. While we may not have the power to eradicate extremism entirely, we can educate and guide people towards actions that benefit our countries and our people. The importance of peace cannot be overstated. It is the foundation upon which societies thrive and prosper. Without peace, progress and development become unattainable. Believers of God have a responsibility to speak out against violence and conflict, especially when religion is used as a justification for such atrocities. When faith is misused to incite war, it is

imperative for those who believe in peace to raise their voices in opposition.

Our faith teaches us the value of peace. Our God is the author of peace, and the scriptures emphasize the importance of living in harmony with one another. As believers, it is our duty to share this message of peace with others, so that they too may experience the blessings of living in harmony with their fellow human beings. Peace is a universal desire, yet it is often elusive. It encompasses tranquillity, harmony, and security, as well as prosperity and well-being. The Bible mentions various forms of peace numerous times, highlighting its significance in the lives of believers. Whether it is inner peace, peace with God, or peace with fellow humans, pursuing peace should be a priority for all individuals and communities.

In the Old Testament, the primary Hebrew word for “peace” is *shalom*, which encompasses relationships between individuals, nations, and God with humanity. Peace, represented by *shalom*, is a cherished state in all of these spheres, often linked to the fulfilment of promises or covenants. For example, a “familiar friend” in Psalm 41:9, translated as “friend of my peace,” refers to someone with whom an individual feels at ease and trusts deeply. The term “peace” itself was a common

greeting in ancient times (1 Samuel 25:6) and remains so in many cultures today. While peace is influenced by human actions and attitudes, it is ultimately viewed as a gift from God (Isaiah 45:7; Leviticus 26:6; John 14:27). Its presence is often seen as a sign of God’s favour and blessing in response to obedience (Isaiah 32:17; Malachi 2:5) and faith (Isaiah 26:3). Conversely, there is no peace for those who persist in wickedness (Isaiah 48:22). Despite its value, peace can also be counterfeited or manipulated. False promises of peace may be used to deceive and manipulate others, as deceitful individuals may feign peaceful intentions while secretly plotting harm (Obadiah 1:7). The Antichrist will confirm a treaty, producing a temporary peace that he will abruptly shatter as he reveals his true colours (Daniel 9:27). False teachers proclaim peace when God is proclaiming judgment (Ezekiel 13:10-16). In Jeremiah’s day, the religious leaders dealt only with the symptoms of the national problems, without addressing the sinful root of the crisis. These false prophets declared that everything was well between God and Israel, saying, “Peace, peace,” when there was no real peace (Jeremiah 6:14).

In the New Testament, the primary Greek word for “peace” is *eirene*, which refers to rest and tranquillity. A key focus of peace



in the New Testament is the advent of Jesus Christ, as announced by the angels in Luke 2:14 (“Peace on earth . . .”). Isaiah had predicted that the Messiah would be the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), and He is called the Lord of peace in 2 Thessalonians 3:16. It is through Christ’s work of justification that we can have peace with God (Romans 5:1), and that peace will keep our hearts and minds secure (Philippians 4:7). God commands us to seek peace (Psalm 34:14; Matthew 5:9). We should “make every effort to do what leads to peace” (Romans 14:19). Of course, there will be some people who do not desire peace, but we are still to do our utmost to be at peace with them (Romans 12:18).

Believers must “let the peace of God rule” in their hearts (Colossians 3:15). This means we have the choice either to trust God’s promises (letting His peace rule) or to rely on ourselves and reject the peace He offers. Jesus gave His disciples peace based on the truth that He has overcome the world (John 14:27; 16:33). Peace is a fruit of the Spirit, so if we are allowing the Spirit of God to rule in our lives, we will experience His peace (Galatians 5:22-23). To be spiritually minded brings life and peace, according to Romans 8:6. The world will continue to have wars and interpersonal conflicts until Jesus comes to establish true, lasting peace (see Isaiah 11:1-10), but God

will give His peace to those who trust Him. Jesus took the chastisement of our peace (Isaiah 53:5) and made it possible for us to have peace with God. Once His peace rules in our hearts, we can share that peace with others; we become publishers of peace (Isaiah 52:7) and ministers of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18). Though we live in the conscious presence of differences.

In the street, at work, and on the television screen, we constantly encounter cultures whose ideas and ideals are unlike ours. One of the great transformations from the twentieth to the twenty-first centuries is that whereas the former was dominated by the politics of ideology, we are now entering an age of the politics of identity. If people of faith cannot live together in peace despite differences, then for the sake of the future, we must find another way. Unfortunately, our world is full of confusion, with conflicts arising between spiritual leaders on one hand and politicians and business leaders on the other. Everyone seems to be fighting each other, and there is a lack of cooperation and understanding. Spiritual leaders struggle to rebuke and correct politicians, and politicians face challenges in addressing the actions of business leaders. All leaders in their respective areas are engaged in conflict with one another. How can we make peace with each other? Who can help in the area of leadership? The

suffering of our leaders reflects the real suffering within our societies. If our leaders cannot communicate peacefully, then our society is in a dire situation, and future generations will blame us for the lack of commitment to our leaders. We leaders must convey the silent cry to those who suffer today from want, hunger, disease, powerlessness, and lack of freedom.

We should embrace liberal democracy in our societies to avoid unnecessary conflicts. Acting according to our preferences within a peace-oriented mentality can promote contemporary politics and economics but may overlook essential aspects of the human condition. Bullets beget bullets. A leader might assert, "I cannot be removed from office by a piece of paper (ballot)." Others argue that even though voters may cast their ballots for their chosen candidates, they may never succeed because the system will never allow a candidate from the opposing party to win. Essentially, what we are trying to convey is that our people are not changing. When we attempt to resolve issues diplomatically, it often results in further chaos. At the end of bitter conflicts, there is a profound yearning for peace. We need to understand how to conclude matters for the benefit of our people. Everything can be resolved at the conference table over tea or coffee, without resorting to bullets or war. We truly want to

change our world; we should aim to change ourselves first. If we desire to treat people mercifully, we must begin by treating ourselves mercifully. Without a deep inner sense of self-esteem and self-worth, we will consistently encounter problems with other people. We won't extend mercy to them. Instead, we may resort to violence and other means to gain power because our thoughts are not focused on serving others. Many leaders, driven by insecurity and a lust for power, seek to protect their positions and impress people to maintain power. In many African countries, leaders are reluctant to relinquish their positions of power.

Leaders must understand that every leadership crisis involves some form of God's wisdom to intervene because without it, conflicts can arise, leading to leadership stagnation. That is why repentance and restoration are the best approaches when leaders are resolving conflicts within their communities. Conflict is always dynamic and can be caused by natural or artificial circumstances. Some circumstances are beyond the control of the players, while others are within their control, but the players may choose to make decisions that end up in conflict. When trust is established between a leader and their followers, even the most difficult decisions will be understood and trusted by the people. Decisions and the way they are made are

major reasons for conflict when a community is in crisis. When a catastrophic crisis occurs, a leader must deal with the aftermath. A crisis brings a new normal, and in the midst of a crisis, decisions are made to try and resolve the problem. However, some leaders make wrong decisions at the helm of a crisis, leading to further conflict.

So then, a leader must maintain their position as a provider of hope to society. Conflict may serve as a vehicle for social change in which stagnant beliefs and values are dissolved, old tyrannies loosened, and individuals released to achieve new and higher goals. Conflicts are always contests between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals. Conflict arises when parties perceive that their interests are incompatible, express hostile attitudes, or pursue their interests through actions that may damage the other parties. Conflict is inevitable, though it may escalate and lead to non-productive results or can be beneficially resolved, leading to quality final products. Although very few people actively seek out conflict, more often, conflict results from miscommunication between people regarding their needs, ideas, beliefs, goals, or values.

In the book of Acts 15:1-8, it states that Paul and Barnabas embarked on a journey to

Jerusalem, having been sent by the church to seek clarification on the issue of circumcision, which had become a source of conflict among believers. Acts 15:1 mentions certain men who came down from Judea and taught the brethren that, unless they were circumcised, they could not be saved. This misunderstanding caused tension in the early church. In Acts 15:6, the apostles and elders came together to consider the matter. Verse 7 shows that the dispute intensified, and Peter had to remind the assembly that Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. As you continue reading the same verses and chapter, you discover that the chapter not only talks about the conflict but also provides the history of the conflict and further guidance on how to handle disputes among believers.

To deal with conflict, we must understand the importance of embracing love, as God is love. This should be an important lesson on earth: "Love others as you love yourself." Learning to love unselfishly is not an easy task, as it runs counter to our self-centered nature. According to Warren (2002), God is more concerned about how believers love one another in his family. Why does God insist that we give special love and attention to other believers? This is because God wants his family to be known for its love more than anything else.

Life without love is worthless. Apostle Paul in the Bible makes this point: "No matter what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love. Love will last forever. Another reason God tells us to love every believer is that it is eternal: "Three things continue forever: faith, hope, and love. And the greatest of these is love." Four of the Ten Commandments deal with relationships with God, while the other six deal with relationships among people or believers. But all ten are about relationships.

Jesus Christ summarized what matters most to God in two statements: Love God and love people. Jesus said, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart; this is the first and greatest commandment." Then Jesus said to love your neighbor as yourself. This reminds believers to consider others first before themselves as this is the nature of God. The Holy Bible in John 3:16 states, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting love." Love is selfless and is the greatest possession every believer should strive to gain. Through love, we solve conflicts among believers. We come to

repentance because of love, and we restore our brothers and sisters in Christ because of love. In other words, repentance and restoration are acts of love.

Believers must remember that conflicts among brothers and sisters in the body of Christ cause our message to lose its appeal, instead of attracting many people to the faith. The church must not contradict the biblical principles of love and unity. Also, remember that conflict resolution involves using relationships, transitioning from an order based on voluntarism to one characterized by relationships. To achieve a great social order, we must be based on equal dignity, love, mutual respect, freedom, and a radical sense of tolerance. Our goal is to promote collective problem-solving, especially in strife-torn communities.

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# **ROADMAP OF PEACE: THE POWER OF REPENTANCE AND RESTORATION IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION.**

Forging Paths to Harmony and Healing

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