

## Pass It On®...

### Tolstoy and the Power of Kindness.

*"The more intelligent a person is, the more he discovers kindness in others," Tolstoy once wrote. In all his great works that explore the indignity and misery brought upon the human race, this one truth stands out brightest in his writing.*

Leo Tolstoy, the great Russian novelist, explored the deepest workings of the human spirit. His sprawling epic, *War and Peace*, depicts the Napoleonic invasion of Russia through five aristocratic families. His words capture the sweeping scope of war and the intimate and tragic results on individuals. Interspersed in the story are philosophical reflections on human freedom, a theme he would return to in *Anna Karenina*.

Tolstoy drew from his own life experiences to explore deep human emotions. His parents died when he was very young, and despite being raised in a privileged society, he grew to detest the inequalities in human conditions. After witnessing the brutalities of war, he traveled throughout Europe to observe educational methods before returning home to build schools for peasant children. He managed a large farm and a large family, and he wrote prolifically. Yet even as his reputation as a writer grew, he experienced a crisis of faith.

At the height of his fame, Tolstoy was filled with despair over the meaninglessness of existence. He had achieved fame, wealth, and a loving family. But the sense that life was not fair gnawed at him. Intellectualism and philosophy left him feeling empty.

He began spending long hours away from his verdant farm, observing the local peasants. He noticed that despite their hard lives, their suffering and their lack of education, they possessed a quiet, unwavering faith. This common bond among the people gives them hope, guides the way they treat each other and helps them confront hardship and death.

At the heart of the realization that restored Tolstoy's faith is the golden rule in nearly every belief system: "Do unto others only as you would have them do unto you." This simple spiritual guide is the

foundation of happiness. All life is interconnected and deserves our compassion and kindness. "For nothing enriches the world more than kindness. It makes mysterious things clear, difficult things easy, and dull things cheerful," Tolstoy wrote. In all his learning, he had discovered that the most intelligent people are always those who are most kind.

**Be Smart. Be Kind...**[PassItOn.com](https://www.passiton.com)

By The Foundation for a Better Life®

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