

R.I.P Jane Goodall: We'll take it from here: Five Lessons I Learned From Her Life and Teaching

By Wayne Visser

🌻 Like millions of others, I was saddened to hear of the passing of Jane Goodall, aged 91. And yet her life - so full, so impactful and so active right until the end - deserves to be celebrated. Reflecting on her incredible life, here is what she taught me:

Lesson 1: Students can become teachers

Goodall began her career as a primatologist under the patronage of the famous paleoanthropologist Louis Leakey, who sent her to study chimpanzee behaviour in Gombe Stream National Park in Tanzania. Pretty soon, she became a world expert on the subject, and took on the mantle of a teacher.

Lesson 2: Compassion is not only for humans

While Goodall was first and foremost a scientist, that didn't stop her caring deeply about the animals she was studying. Over decades, she developed powerful emotional bonds with individual chimpanzees - and the feelings were reciprocated. She showed that animals feel emotions, just like us. They need our compassion.

Lesson 3: Nature conservation is about people

A lesson Goodall learned early on was that if she was going to succeed in protecting chimpanzees, she needed people on her side, especially local communities. Without economic alternatives to poaching, chimpanzees were on a path to extinction. Conservation, she realised, only works hand-in-hand with human development.

Lesson 4: Change is about movement building

Charity only gets us so far. The Jane Goodall Institute was established in 1977 as a way to channel funds to wildlife conservation, and it's been a crucial lifeline for many chimpanzees. But arguably Goodall made a bigger impact by setting up the Roots & Shoots youth program in 1991, which has grown into a global education and action network.

Lesson 5: Reasons for hope

After a lifetime of activism that was full of setbacks in the context of a growing biodiversity crisis, Goodall distilled five sources of hope: 1) the power of youth, 2) the resilience of nature, 3) the human intellect when guided by compassion, 4) the indomitable human spirit, and 5) the unexpected potential of technology to aid conservation.

We all need heroes who show us what is possible with courage, compassion and

perseverance. I feel privileged to have lived at the same time as remarkable individuals like Nelson Mandela and Jane Goodall. They inspire us to try every day to take positive action, to be better, and to love more fully.

Rest In Peace, Jane Goodall. We'll take it from here. 🌻

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