

THE ACT OF FORGIVENESS

PULSE OF SPIRIT
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I truly believe that if we can learn the act of forgiveness we can change this world. This is not an idea based on idealism, or even wishful thinking. I know it. I've witnessed it, I've lived it, I've experienced it. When I think of forgiveness, my mind naturally goes to the individuals I met while in Ghana, and their ability to choose this path. They have chosen to forgive the experiences of war, they have forgiven injustice, they have forgiven their government and the circumstance for which they live. Most of us don't have to experience the largeness of these experiences, but they did, and yet they still chose forgiveness. And with that choice of forgiveness they're happy. Their hearts are light, and they have set themselves free despite the limitations that surround them.

That is what forgiveness does for each of us. We can set ourselves free when we choose to walk

this path. When we don't choose it, the only person suffering is ourselves, because we are carrying that in our hearts.

I was a social worker for a while and I was able to witness it in that realm as well. I was working with spousal abuse, child abuse, sexual abuse—these horrific experiences that people had to go through. And then you meet these individuals who have chosen forgiveness. With that choice of forgiveness, they then chose to share their story and to show people that there's a different path. Despite what you have experienced and what you have gone through, there is a different path. It's an opportunity for us, and it is a choice that we get to make for ourselves.

These are real stories, powerful stories. Stories have the opportunity to connect us with the

heart. Stories open the heart, and when our hearts are open we can connect, we can forgive, and we can love. The mind is beautiful, and it's important and it's powerful. Ideas come in through the mind and are exchanged between minds, but true connection has to come from the heart. The mind won't solve the issues of the world. The forgiving heart will.

Forgiveness is one of the initial steps in taking that path, in making that choice, because without forgiveness we carry these things and they're *heavy* in our hearts, and they're dark. If we continue to carry them for years, they turn into something really toxic. Without forgiveness, these things that we take on can become a poison in our heart, a poison that we give to ourselves. We've chosen to carry it. We've chosen to keep it in our being and in our body and make it our own, when it *isn't*.

Those things destroy. But forgiveness, light and love, builds. And despite how large the darkness might seem and feel, the light is always stronger. The light is always more powerful. We get to choose the path that we want to take. Now, I don't know about you, but I want to choose light, to choose love, to choose forgiveness. Forgiveness is a gift we give to ourselves, to others, and to our world.

Forgiveness is something that we also have the opportunity to experience as we share it. It is similar to all of the emotions in the emotional realm—you have to experience them before you can give them. Love—if you love somebody, you have to embody love. You feel

love within yourself, and then you offer it into the world. Compassion—you feel it in yourself, you offer it to your world. And it's the same for the other side of the spectrum. Anger—you feel it in yourself, and then you give it to the world. Hate, pain—all of those things are within yourself, and then you offer them into your world.

So it's important to recognize that what you're feeling is what you're giving. So take the moment to recognize what is happening, and choose something beautiful to offer. Choose forgiveness. If you don't choose forgiveness and you end up offering something not so authentic of yourself and not so beautiful, forgive yourself for this as well. We're often the hardest on ourselves, even more than on others. Forgiveness—it's the first step.

When we choose forgiveness, it doesn't mean that we're approving the behavior that has happened. It doesn't mean that we're saying it's okay. It means that we're saying, *I choose me, and I love myself enough to move forward in my life and let go of what no longer serves me*. Forgiveness means *I matter*, my heart matters, my world matters, and I am not going to choose to let those things affect who I am and how I show up in my world. When we take those things on, we're not only affecting ourselves but we're affecting every person we meet, because we make our decisions based on past experiences. If we're holding pain and regret and anger in our hearts, then when we meet people, unfortunately they have to face those things in us as well. Choose to forgive. You owe it to yourself

and to those you will encounter further down your path.

That's another piece of why it is so important to forgive: so that you can make choices in a light-filled, beautiful and pure state within yourself. Because if you don't choose forgiveness, you're giving that situation or that person the opportunity to not only have control over your past but control over your present, and the potential to have control over your future. It is huge and does more harm than we even realize. We are the ones who have to do that work—nobody else. The person who harmed us can't do that for us. *We* have to do it. We have to choose that and embody it and experience it for, and within, ourselves.

I think that forgiveness calls for a maturity in humanity, because if we choose the path of forgiveness we cannot continue to live the way that we have. And I don't just believe this, I *know* this—humanity needs to mature. We need to mature. We need to change. We have been lost in war and pain and separation for so long, and it's never been the answer; it'll never be the answer. So we, the people who know that there's a different option, that there's a different path, that there's something else to bring, we are the ones responsible in bringing that. Some people don't know. Some people haven't awakened, but we have.

There is a largeness to that, because it's not about us anymore. Once you wake up, it's about your world. We have a responsibility to do something different, bring something

different and to be something different. Be the example. I know that one person can initiate tremendous change. One person. I've lived it. We can do that in whatever it is that we're passionate about, whatever it is that we believe in. If we stand for it and stand in it, we *will* make a change, we *will* do something different.

We *have* to do it. The world is suffering and the world is struggling and, not to be a Debbie Downer, but it looks like we're starting to run out of time. The time is now. No more "One day..." *One day I'm going to do this, one day I'm going to bring this, one day I'm going to be ready.* You're ready *now*, I'm ready now, we're ready now to do something different and to bring something different. Choose something different.

I was thinking last night about forgiveness, and a song from Tim McGraw, "Humble and Kind," came into my head. There is a line in it that says, "Bitterness keeps you from flying." Bitterness keeps us from flying because it weighs us down, it holds us down. We can't spread our wings; we can't lift up when we're weighted down. So when we choose forgiveness, we can remove that weight, we can let it go, we can spread our wings, and we can fly. We can bring our gifts and we can change this world together.

I also think it's important to realize that when somebody hurts you, it's because they're hurting. Only hurting people hurt others. If we can recognize that in the moment for what it is, then instead of taking it on as a burden inside of

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ourselves, we can choose to bless that person, we can choose love. We can show them that there's something different that we can do and be—together.

I want to read one of my favorite poems.

*She was one of the greatest forces of all
because she never chose to destroy.
Instead she went off into the darkness
seeking out the demons
and those cast aside,
not to drive them away
but rather to show them that even they
were capable of creating the most
unimaginable light.*

Every single person in this world can bring the most unimaginable light, but sometimes they forget to see that for themselves. We can see it in each other. We can call it forth. And we can do that together—we can forgive ourselves, we can forgive each other, and we can forgive our world. We can choose something different. And I'm here to tell you that I'm ready to do it. I'm done talking about it. I'm ready to be the change and to make this world a more beautiful place, the place that it's meant to be.

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