TED Talk – Forgiveness Can Change the World

Forgiveness can change the world… and it desperately needs it! We live in a society that feeds on anger, bitterness, hate… and even if it is unwittingly, this needs the change! Too often, vengeance and ‘self-righteous’ anger are encouraged as it seems degrading to let go of a stubborn defiance towards someone else who has hurt you. But why is this the case? Why is forgiveness so lacking from our society? Well, it doesn’t help that we cram ideas of anger, violence and hate into people by making heroes like in Rambo, Dirty Harry and countless Marvel movie villains. There has been an increasing number of anti-hero movies about bad people, particularly comic book movies. Our world is feeding on these things, but slowly, it is turning around to bite us back. Have you noticed how many relationships are being destroyed, tearing apart families? Have you noticed how much resentment and distrust is in our communities, tearing apart countries? Have you noticed how many conflicts and wars are raging, tearing apart our world? This needs to change, but our society knows and cares little about the antidote to all these problems… forgiveness! But that is why we are all here today: to show how forgiveness can change your life, and consequently, the world.

So, what actually is forgiveness? It is the ability to stop feeling anger or resentment towards someone else after a regrettable situation. Think of it like a bucket of cold water used to douse flames, preventing them from spreading into a massive bushfire. This is what anger and resentment do: they grow until things get out of control, but life is too precious to waste on smouldering arguments and grudges! On the screen is a representation of our grudge-filled society… we need to put the fire out! Use forgiveness to calm the flames and cool the heat so we can move on after regrettable situations to live fulfilling and peaceful lives.

But why is it so hard to forgive? When we forgive, we let go of resentment towards an injustice, and it may feel like we are excusing actions that really weren’t acceptable. So much hurt and pride can be associated with self-righteous anger, making it extremely hard to relinquish and choose peace instead. But forgiveness is not excusing unacceptable actions or even saying that it didn’t matter; it is the strength of mind that enables you to accept what happened, get up and move on. Forgiveness isn’t weakness, it is the strength to overcome your anger and grasp onto peace.

Then, there is the matter of how do you actually do it? This can be complicated, as there are no step-by-step instructions that tell us exactly what to do. We may be able to outwardly forgive because we know it is the ‘right thing to do’ or because it is what other people expect of us. However, true forgiveness that brings peace doesn’t just come from saying, “I forgive you”, it comes from a change in view towards an incident. Instead of letting it cause anger and resentment, we accept what happened and embrace peace. This can be tricky, but it can be done by choosing to empathise and understand other people’s perspectives, accepting the consequences or implications involved and seeing past regretful experiences. In the end, it comes down to our motivation. Why are we willing to forgive? Here are some benefits that make it worthwhile…

Forgiveness increases the quality of our relationships with others, promoting a happier and more meaningful life. Friendships are so valuable, but fragile when grudges or resentment are left to grow. Forgiveness, however, can and rebuild trust to strengthen the bond of friendship. You can visualise it like a rope – each time the relationship gets damaged, it frays and gets pulled apart, but forgiveness binds it back together even tighter. Forgiveness is worth it to strengthen our relationships and thus, improve our lives!

In addition, scientists have found that forgiveness can improve our physical health as it reduces the mental strain. This is because anger and hurt are like physical burdens that weigh down on us by switching on the ‘fight or flight’ mode for long periods of time. This is associated with high blood pressure and cholesterol levels which lead to heart problems, poor sleep, and higher levels of anxiety, depression and stress. Forgiveness can free us of these physical burdens as it releases resentment and anger and chooses peace instead.

Another important reason to forgive is to overcome the effects of anger. This is a problem for many of us as we all experience irreversible regrets when anger controls our actions or words. However, forgiveness is the key that sets us free from anger. It isn’t glossing over the fact that something bad has happened, it is accepting this and consciously responding with empathy and peace that frees us from the anger associated with an incident. A quote from a wise old man says, “Forgiveness is to set a prisoner free, and discover that prisoner was *you*.” Use the key of forgiveness to free ourselves from the detrimental effects of anger!

Forgiveness is worth it because it can change the world! It can enhance our own lives by strengthening and reinforcing our relationships, improving our physical health and overcoming the effects of anger. We have the key to unlock ourselves from the hold of anger and resentment, we have the bucket of cold water to douse the flames, so use it today and positively influence our society! I’m sure we all have someone, somewhere or even ourselves who needs a bit of forgiveness. So, when you leave this room, consciously choose to forgive and move on in life, and slowly, the world will be much happier and at peace because of it!

*964 Words*