

The Book of Joy

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Abstract

This article reviews two recently published books co-written by the Archbishop Desmond Tutu. *The Book of Joy* was a weeklong conversation with the Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso as recorded by Douglas Abrams. *The Book of Forgiving* was co-written by Mpho Tutu, an ordained minister and Archbishop's daughter. The Book of Forgiving provides a step-by-step guide towards healing and forgiving.

• Key Words:

Buddhism, Christianity, Fourfold Path, Forgiving, Forgiveness, Joy, Mental Immunity, Ubuntu

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* This book review is a special contribution.

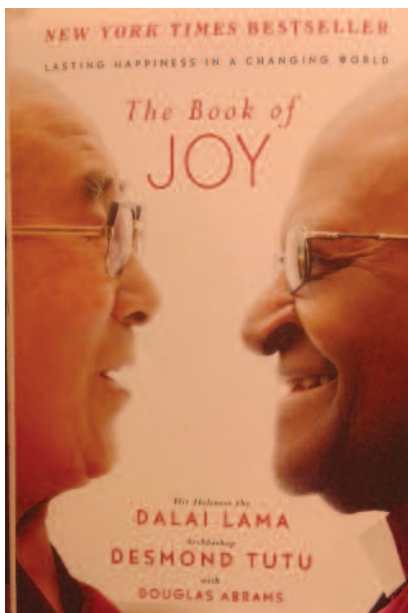
The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World

One of the more popular books on religion in bookstores and libraries today is a weeklong conversation between two of the most famous people in the world. Better known as the Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso is the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism and has lived in exile since he was forced to flee Tibet in 1959 due to the Chinese occupation of his homeland. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1989. The Archbishop Desmond Tutu was also a Nobel Peace Prize Winner (1984) due to his leadership against the Apartheid system in South Africa. This was a full decade before his remarkable work with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The third name on the cover of *The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World* is not so well known, but I discovered he knows the Archbishop intimately and has had a long working relationship with him. Douglas Abrams has edited and co-written several books with Archbishop Tutu including, *The Book of Forgiving* in 2014.

Archbishop Tutu and Abrams flew to Dharamsala India in April of 2015 for a birthday celebration and an exchange of thoughts on joy. The trip was a year in the making, and only happened when the Archbishop's doctor agreed to it. Having struggled with health issues his entire life—a survivor of both polio and tuberculosis—he is dealing with prostate cancer now as well. Although, they had only met a handful of times, the Dalai Lama and the Archbishop share a relaxed, kindred spirit that shines through their conversations.

Both men find joy to be more important than happiness. As the Archbishop says “Joy is much bigger than happiness. While happiness is often seen as being dependent on external circumstances, joy is not”.



Happiness is merely a mood and may result from a pleasant day or a nice song. Joy is cultivated spiritually, and is the result of meditation, practice and finding meaning in the adversity in life that we all face. According to the Dalai Lama, joy is the innate state of humanity but, it needs to be cultivated to truly experience it.

The two spiritual leaders agree on quite a lot, and they stress the necessity of having hardship in

life to become joyful. Experiencing pain and sorrow allows us to appreciate the beauty in the world. They also both stress the need to get out of oneself, and not become too self-centered. Preoccupying, selfish thoughts just lead to disappointment and frustration.

Of course, staying truly connected in the modern world is far more difficult than it used to be. Jinpa, an aide to the Dalai Lama, relates what a difficult life they were born into on the plains of Tibet. Scarcity of food and survival were real concerns, but the connectedness they felt made life more tolerable and enjoyable. Now living in Montreal, Jinpa tells Abrams modern life is unfocused. “Our opportunities are so much greater, now, but so, too, are our anxieties”. The Dalai Lama sees this stress coming from too much expectation and ambition. A re-examination of priorities is in order, and we need to question what is truly important. The Archbishop agrees, and tells the anecdote of peo-

ple thinking that he needs time to pray because he is a man of the cloth, while he feels that finding the time for prayer and reflection is more important for the laity.

A common term throughout the Archbishop's teachings is *ubuntu*, which he defines as "a person is [only] a person through other persons". Sharing and interacting with others is what makes us fully human. Without seeking out others we will always be missing something.

I was tempted to call this book optimistic, but the Archbishop corrected me, telling us that as happiness is to joy, so is optimism to hope. Hope is the more firmly rooted of the two, and more able to withstand adversity. Both men see humanity as good at our core. Though they disagree on how much we can control our negative feelings. The Dalai Lama focusses on inner values and believes we can learn to resist negativity, while the Archbishop feels that these emotions are part of human nature and that we should stop being so hard on ourselves when we have negative thoughts. The Archbishop calls the Dalai Lama the more cerebral of the two, and calls himself more instinctual.

Interspersed with stories of the Archbishop's health (and a small amount of life under Apartheid) and the Dalai Lama's life in exile, including the night he fled, are recent scientific studies Abrams occasionally brings in to complement their views. One that stuck with me is by psychologist Sonya Lyubomirsky, stating the three largest influences on increasing joyfulness are a positive approach, the expression of gratitude, and making a choice to be kind and generous.

The bulk of the book is organized around the topics of conversation for each day of the week, culminating in the Eight Pillars of Joy: perspective, humility, humor, acceptance, forgiveness, gratitude, compas-

sion and generosity. The final section of the book, Joy Practices gives step-by-step instructions on prayers and meditations used by both men to achieve what the Dalai Lama calls mental immunity, cultivating more positive thoughts and avoiding destructive emotions.

They do touch on the tenets of their respective faiths, and are open about the differences, but this book is much more of an incentive to living happily and joyfully today.

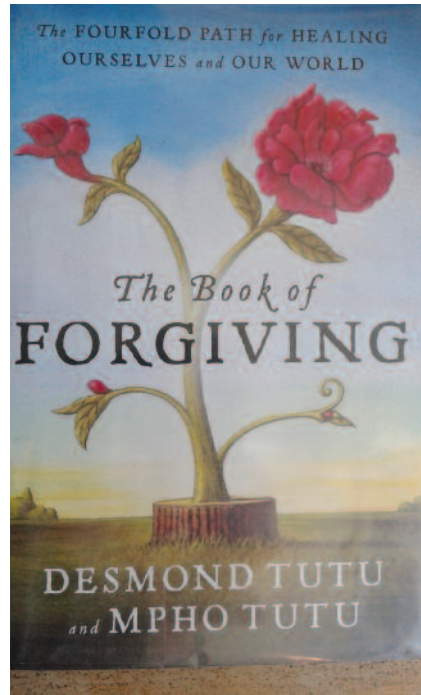
The Book of Forgiving: The Fourfold Path for Healing Ourselves and Our World

Written with his daughter Mpho, an ordained minister in her own right, Archbishop Tutu again displays hopefulness as they declare in the introduction “It is our most cherished belief that there is no one who is irredeemable, no situation that is without hope, and no crime that cannot be forgiven.”

Filled with anecdotal stories of those who have gone through the Fourfold Path to Forgiveness; some of the stories are very personal. Mpho’s housekeeper was brutally murdered in her home and Desmond’s father was physically abusive. While the Archbishop’s story recounts his time as a child, and a father who has long since passed away, reading Mpho’s story you get a sense that she is still very much in the process of forgiving and recovering. There are other stories that touch on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as well as a story of parents who lost both daughters to a drunk driver. In fact, the parents and the drunk driver speak together in the community in the hopes of preventing similar tragedies. Similar in tone to the *Book*

of Joy, the Tutus argue for the need for forgiveness from a health standpoint, mostly spiritually but physically as well.

Where *The Book of Joy* is mostly a dialogue of disparate, but complementing viewpoints, *The Book of Forgiving* is a step-by-step guide to achieving the difficult goal of truly forgiving someone. The Tutus try to temper this by acknowledging that forgiveness is not an easy process, but continue to stress the emotional benefits of forgiving. They wrote this book be-



cause they see us all as bound to cause pain to those around us, as well as be hurt by them, The Archbishop has seen and felt more than his share of pains and indignities, He discusses the sacrifice his wife Leah and he made of raising their children in neighboring Swaziland so that they would not receive an inferior education in the Apartheid system. But his work in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is what truly stands out. Not only was amnesty granted for torture and murder for the perpetrators of violence for facing the victims and their families with an honest account, but remorse was not even needed to participate. While there was some controversy around this Archbishop Tutu does not feel that justice was subverted as these were very public accounts and the victims and their families needed to hear the truth in

order for healing to begin. The victims also needed a safe place to share their experiences.

The Archbishop tells of a lesser known process in Northern Ireland according to the BBC documentary *Facing the Truth*, which brought families of victims of violence and the perpetrators of violence together. Unlike the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, there was no authority to grant amnesty in Northern Ireland. They just wanted forgiveness.

Each chapter is followed by a succinct summary that makes it simple to review a specific point, followed by meditations, a ritual, and journal exercise making this an interactive book that can be referred to numerous times.

The Tutus are clear to denote that forgiving is distinct from forgetting and can only be done with complete honesty. In fact saying “I forgive you” without going through Fourfold Path may lead to lingering resentments. Not forgetting also means that you don’t have to put yourself in harm’s way again. “I may never forget what you have done to me, but I will forgive. I will do everything in my power not to let you harm me again.”

Beyond the early introductory chapters The Fourfold Path are looked at in detail.

Telling the Story

In order for the healing to begin, the person seeking forgiveness must tell his or her story in an honest, factual manner. The Tutus see this as important to the rest of society as well as the individual who

has been harmed, stating that if we don't share our stories with our families it will cause pain and isolation. They even cite an Emory University survey called "Do You Know" where children who could answer more questions about their families' stories were more resilient.

Naming the Hurt

After telling the story, putting a name on the emotions we are feeling leads to a better understanding of how the incident affected us. Here the authors address the well-known stages of grief, and if we do not address them we cannot move beyond each stage.

Granting Forgiveness

Free will is very much in play, and forgiving is a choice. We can seek revenge instead, but there is growth and maturity in forgiveness. Forgiving allows us to take control of the story and write a new chapter. When we forgive, we also see the other party as fully human. "We have accepted our own human vulnerability and frailty. Now we must accept the vulnerability and frailty of those who harmed us".

Renewing or Releasing the Relationship

Renewal is preferred, but there are circumstances (usually a matter of safety) where the victim may choose to end the relationship instead.

Renewing the relationship allows for growth and not a return to a time before the injury occurred.

The Book of Forgiving is written for lay audience and can be easily grasped by anyone researching the topic for the first time. Written as a guide to a process that has many false starts, its clear simple organization makes it easy to find specific sections to re-read. Father and daughter write in a nice joint style, but his is the voice that comes through stronger (the book even slips into “I” instead of “we” on a few occasions). Still, Mpho has a powerful voice as well and has a lot to add to the story.