

Pay it forward



Release year: 2000

Duration: 123 minutes

Movie category: Drama, Romance

Director: Mimi Leder

Writers: Catherine Ryan Hyde (book), Leslie Dixon (screenplay)

Main actors: Kevin Spacey, Haley Joel Osment and Helen Hunt

Life lessons from an 11-year old boy!

At the beginning of the school year, a teacher writes an exercise on the blackboard.

"Think of an idea with which you can change the world and put it into action"

This is a great challenge - for children who are not yet tired of life and its misfortunes, children that still believe that everything is possible.

Among the various "naive" suggestions of the children, there is one that makes everyone think deeper.

A kid suggested the following idea: He will help 3 people and will ask them not to pay him back for what he did for them, but to pay it forward, to forward this action to other people. In this way, a pyramid will be formed with great potential and will spread good to more and more people, making the whole world better at some time.

Utopian? Maybe. Life is hard and has its own traps to discourage us. It puts inactivity, pessimism, arrogance, lies to keep us in chains. Man has got only one weapon against all that, his inner Will. So it is all about inner dignity.

One must really feel inside himself the necessity to be better in order to be able to build a better world. Such a venture demands "a radical act of faith and kindness from everyone", according to the kid's words.

A young kid is transformed to a teacher to remind us that we are fully responsible for our lives.

Gradually he has to confront the weakness that is hidden within every man.

"It is difficult for some people that are used to something, to get to change it even if it's something bad."

Every man has mental, sentimental and physical habits that he identifies with that let him hold on to something, an identity that is actually only a mask. Habits are prejudices that make him act in a certain predictable way. In this way prejudices and fear for everything new emerges (he can not identify himself with something new).

Breaking habits is liberation and an act of sacred madness at the same time. In what other way can one overcome the rational and calculated ideas of the human mind that constrain him, if not with heroism? Heroism always seems utopian. It is not easy either to identify or to constrain oneself within the narrow rational limits or standards. That is why it is madness to try and make the world a better place.

To start such an effort, first you have to believe in the Good that every man has inside him; and this is very heroic in itself. If we look at history, we will see that anything that changed the world to be better, started from people that realised strongly and clearly what is hidden in this kid's words:

"If we don't try for that (everyone to be better and pay it forward), then we all lose in some way...."

Even then, our mind may make us think that life is too short for such an effort. Nevertheless, if a short life can affect many people, then its duration is multiplied, in a magical way...

It is a very sweet and deeply humanitarian movie.