



BLIND ————— i just can't

Begin each day this week by praying **THE LORD'S PRAYER**:
"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily
bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."
(Matthew 6:9-13)

day ONE

READ Matthew 5:21-24. Jesus begins by talking about murder, anger, and a heart full of contempt. *What does He identify as a path to anger, contempt and even murder? Unforgiveness is like drinking poison and hoping someone else would die.* Whenever we hold unforgiveness in our hearts, we have, in effect, begun the process of killing ourselves. *Do you agree with those statements? Why, or why not?* **THINK** about how unforgiveness leads to contempt. It may begin as contempt for the person who has hurt you, but will inevitably lead to a pattern of holding forgiveness itself in contempt. When we hold something in contempt, we're unable to receive any blessings or benefits from it. **THINK** about that. If we hold forgiveness in contempt, we're unable to receive, as well as give, forgiveness. *What kind of people will we become?*

PRAY: God, I confess that when I'm hurt I want to hold on to it. Letting go feels like pretending it never happened. It seems like the only way to overcome the hurt is to get even, but You say the only way to overcome is to forgive. Help me to trust Your ways and Your wisdom. Help me to choose forgiveness.

day TWO

READ John 16:33 and 2 Timothy 3:12.
We will have trouble, we will be hurt and we have no control over much of it.
In Choosing Forgiveness Nancy DeMoss writes, "*We simply don't have any choice about many of the things that happen to us. Our only hope lies in realizing that we do have a choice about how we respond to life's circumstances – and it is those responses that determine the outcome of our life.*"

When we're wronged we have two choices: **#1 taking the path of unforgiveness and contempt OR #2 taking the path of forgiveness which leads to freedom.** A person on the path of unforgiveness stores up resentment, bitterness, anger, frustration, and solitude that can leave him/her lonely and small.

See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. Hebrews 12:15

A person on the path of forgiveness stores up mercy and grace and finds healing for his/her soul. *Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger... Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave you.* Ephesians 4:31-32

CONSIDER what's ahead on the path you've chosen. Holding on to resentment, anger and unforgiveness will never lead you to the place of healing. *When you're faced with a decision between anger and grace, which do you choose to store in your heart?*
PRAY/REFLECT about what you're storing in your heart. *On which path are you traveling?*

day THREE

When we talk about forgiving, many of us can easily call to mind a time in which we needed to forgive or be forgiven. **THINK** back to a specific instance in your life in which you struggled to or were unable to forgive. Perhaps it was an obvious hurt that was a well-known offense. Often unforgiveness lies below the radar of others and sometimes even ourselves. When we travel, we're able to identify our location by landmarks along the way. The same can be said of the path on which our hearts roam.

READ through the following statements. *Do you recognize these landmarks on the path of unforgiveness and contempt?* **TAKE** time to reflect on specific instances that come to mind and reflect on any unforgiveness in your heart as you read them.

I often replay in my mind the incident(s) that hurt me.

When I think of a particular person or situation, I still feel angry.

I try not to think about the person, event, or circumstance which caused me so much pain.

I have a subtle, secret desire to see this person pay for what he/she did to me.

Deep in my heart, I wouldn't mind if something bad happened to the person(s) who hurt me.

I often find myself telling others how this person has hurt me.

A lot of my conversations (both in my head and to others) revolve around this situation.

Whenever his/her name comes up, I'm more likely to say something negative than positive about him/her. **GO** back and **READ** the scripture from Hebrews and Ephesians from day TWO. **PRAY** day ONE's prayer.

day FOUR

How many instances came to mind as you read yesterday's statements? Four or five? More than 15? None? Many of us don't think of ourselves as bitter or unforgiving people. **THINK** back over the past year of your life. *When times get hard and people hurt you, what's your "go-to" response? Do you find yourself counting the debts owed to you by others? If a close friend hurts you, are you more quickly to move toward forgiveness or not? Are your relationships defined by your past hurts?* **LOOK** at the definition of forgiveness from week one: "**The process of concluding resentment, indignation or anger as a result of a perceived offense, difference or mistake, and/or ceasing to demand punishment or restitution.**" Notice the offense might not even be real. *What's your "go-to" response when you're cut off in traffic? How quickly do you move to assuming the worse motives from others? Is your life defined by a pattern of forgiveness or unforgiveness?* Our society has become so saturated with anger and bitterness that we almost consider it a normal response to life.

What's normal for you? **READ** Matthew 5:38-42.

PRAY: God, help me root out all forms of bitterness, resentment and anger in my life. Help me choose grace, mercy and forgiveness.

day FIVE

TAKE time today to look over this week's devotional. *Did you discover unforgiveness or resentment? What about patterns? Were you surprised at what you found? How would it look if your "go-to" response was one of compassion, grace, and mercy?* **IMAGINE** a life in which your initial response is one of kindness and grace rather than anger and frustration. **BEGIN to PRAY and DREAM** with God about a life which embodies forgiveness -- Instead of holding forgiveness in contempt, embracing mercy and grace. Instead of storing blocks of anger and bitterness in our hearts which lead to an unforgiving life, *daily* choosing to store blocks of mercy leading to a lifestyle of forgiveness. *What kind of change would that bring to your family? Your job? Your relationships?* **READ** Matthew 5:3-10.

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