

Devotional Day 1

Day 1 Scriptures:

Eph 4:23

Eph 4:29-32

Micah 7:28-19

Psalms 103:1-22

John 13:34-35

Forgiveness. It's a concept we all know we should extend to others, but it's easier said than done. Over the next few days, we'll discuss how to forgive others, ourselves, and even God. Through real-life people's experiences, discover how you can find freedom through forgiveness.

When I used to imagine forgiving others, I always had a picture of what it would look like. First, the person would realize on their own what they had done and how deeply it had hurt me. Second, they would come to me with some big apology wanting to put forth effort and hard work to make everything okay in our relationship again. Sounds simple enough, right?

I laugh at myself as I write that, knowing that the perfect picture I had in my head is wrong. You see, forgiveness isn't actually about the other person. Forgiveness is a decision I have to make for myself—a decision to let go of my unforgiveness and choose freedom and love over anger. To choose peace over pain. To choose keeping the relationship over keeping score of who's right.

Oddly enough, once I decided to make the decision of forgiveness, the relationship usually started to get better.

This isn't a new concept. Since the beginning of time humans have hurt one another. But we've all got a choice to either keep holding onto that unforgiveness we've been carrying—that self-

justified anger that weighs us down and keep a detailed list of how the other person has wronged us—or to let it go, moving our pride aside and deciding the relationship is worth fighting for by giving our forgiveness.

Here's the deal: Holding onto a grudge is kind of like holding onto a cactus. Hang with me on this. It keeps others away from you and it keeps pain inside of you. It doesn't matter if someone else handed you the cactus. It's your responsibility to put it down.

In Ephesians 4, Paul tells the Church to lay aside all bitter words, temper tantrums, revenge, profanity, and insults. Instead we should speak kind and loving words toward one another. Why? Because God has graciously forgiven us.

We are so unworthy of forgiveness, yet Jesus gives it freely to us. We are called to be like Him. To show others the love of Christ. What better way to exemplify His love to others than to forgive them?

Today reflect on these questions as you go on the journey of forgiveness.

Ask: What unforgiveness are you holding on to? How might you let go of it and choose forgiveness instead?

Pray: *God, thank You for freely forgiving me when we don't deserve it. Help me to extend that same love and grace to others. Soften our hearts toward those who have wronged me, and help me become more like You by loving others the way You do. In Jesus' name, amen.*