

# Personal Devotional

(by Crystal Craig)

9 "This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 **And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors...**"

—Matthew 6:9-12

## *A Forgiving Breeze*

Forgiveness is an act of love and grace, one that we have the privilege of offering to others because God first offered it to us. When our Heavenly Father opens His mouth and whispers, "I forgive you," I imagine His breath sweeping through our spirits like a warm and refreshing breeze, clearing away the worldly cobwebs that try to cling to us, closing doors that should never have been opened, and dusting away the shame and guilt that coats every surface.

God is generous with His forgiveness, and He commands us to be generous with each other, even forgiving the same person time and again (Matt. 18:21-22). That doesn't mean we should allow ourselves to continually be hurt or taken advantage of. To forgive does not mean to forget, tolerate, and condone hurtful behavior. We can and should create healthy boundaries between us and the people who repeatedly cause us pain, but we can still forgive them.

God commands us to forgive not just because He is a God of grace, but because *unforgiveness* keeps us trapped in wounds He wants to heal. When we hold that hurt and anger close for too long, it turns into bitterness that seeps into our hearts, minds, and souls. It weighs us down and tethers us to the past when we should be moving forward.

Sometimes we struggle to forgive because we don't believe the person who hurt us or failed us deserves to be forgiven (sometimes the person we struggle the most to forgive is ourselves). In truth, none of us *deserve* forgiveness, and yet Jesus died so that we could be forgiven and saved. And if Jesus could call out to God and ask Him to forgive the people who put Him on that cross (Luke 23:34), then He has more than enough love and grace to help us forgive.

## *Self-Reflection*

- Who do you need to forgive?
- What do you need to forgive that person for?
- Do you believe Jesus can help you forgive that person?

## *Prayer*

Heavenly Father, You offer me grace when I don't deserve it, and You want me to extend that grace to others. I know that I need to forgive (name) for (what they've done), but I'm not strong enough on my own. Jesus, let Your grace flow through me so that I can forgive (name) and move forward into the plans You have for my life.