

An aerial photograph of a dense green forest. A dirt road enters from the top right and splits into two paths that curve downwards and outwards. The text 'STAY THE PATH' is overlaid in a white, bold, sans-serif font, centered within a white rectangular border.

STAY THE PATH

GROWTH GROUP

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STAY THE PATH

1 THESSALONIANS

Tough seasons often make it tough to see the goodness. When life's storm-clouds loom overhead it can be hard to see their silver lining. The Thessalonian church was born and grew in one of these tough seasons, in one of these storms of life. This began with Paul and Silas visiting Thessalonica for a few weeks, preaching the gospel, and then quickly getting kicked out of the city because the Jews were jealous and saying the city was being told to follow King Jesus instead king Caesar (Acts 17:1-9). And so being forced to leave (2:17), concerned for the young church (2:17-18), Paul and Silas send Timothy to see how they were going (3:1-5). Now the letter that we know as 1 Thessalonians comes to the church in response to Timothy's visit (3:6-13). In the letter Paul encourages them to keep going by celebrating the power of the gospel that is transforming them and producing holiness, love, and a future hope in their life.

The Apostle Paul reflects on a number of times in 1 Thessalonians how they received the Gospel when life was tough and stormy, "You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit" (1 Thes. 1:6; 2:2, 14, 17; 3:1-4).

1 Thessalonians is a book written by the ministry team of Paul, Silas and Timothy (1:1). This letter came to the church after Paul and Silas visited Thessalonica for a few weeks, preached the gospel, and then quickly got kicked out because the Jews were jealous and began to say the city was being told to follow King Jesus instead king Caesar (Acts 17:1-9). So they left, and at some point sent this letter back as an encouragement to keep going in their faith.





But Paul also reminds them that tough and stormy seasons will come. In fact he says, “as followers of Jesus we know we’re destined for suffering” (3:3). In other words, suffering comes with the territory of following Jesus. And so, Paul writes to encourage these young Christians to stay the path, to keep on track, to remain on the way -- “to establish and exhort you in your faith, that no one be moved by these afflictions” (3:2). William Cowper in his poem ‘Mysterious Ways’ captures the reality the Apostle Paul has seen and encourages the Thessalonian church to see,

*Ye fearful saints fresh courage take,
the clouds that you much dread,
are big with mercy and will break in blessings on your
head.*

*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
but trust him for his grace;
behind a frowning providence,
He hides a smiling face.
His purposes will ripen fast,
unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
but sweet will be the flower.*

The letter of 1 Thessalonians is unique to the other letters of Paul, but not for the obvious reason that they are written to different churches. But for the reason that this letter is a celebration of how in a tough and stormy season, these Christians have flourished. God has worked through these bitter circumstances to produce the sweet likeness of Christ in there. This letter is also unique because out of all Paul’s letters 1 Thessalonians is considered to be the first letter penned by Paul.

Paul begins the letter with a reminder of the power of the gospel and their conversion story. The power of God came through the Holy Spirit in the preaching of the word, and transformed the church in such a way that outsiders began to see the change within them (chapter 1). Paul speaks about how they spoke the message, and how it was received, and how even in the face of suffering God, through the gospel, keeps moving in power (chapter 2).



Paul expresses his strong desire to see the Thessalonians again. He had feared that Satan had worked through trials to tear them away from Jesus, but after Timothy's visit, Paul is encouraged by their faith, love and hope (chapter 3).

Paul then moves to answer some specific questions that Timothy brought back from the church concerning the present situation. The rest of the letter is shaped by the reality that the gospel-transformed life produces a love for God and a desire to live a life pleasing to God. A life not of lust and immorality but of love and holiness. As they follow Jesus in this way, outsiders will see a difference. Their lives will be a reflection of God, a God-likeness, or Christ-likeness (chapter 4). A big part of the ongoing life of the believer is to know that Jesus will return. That one day we will be with Him. Such a future hope is the motivation to live a life pleasing to God -- to stay awake, alert, ready to go and not to be asleep. As the believer remembers that Jesus is coming, they ought to encourage one another with this future hope (Chapter 4-5). This leads to the final exhortation, to build one another up (5:11), which is explained in the final words of the letter.

It's all about the community of God gathered together, taking responsibility for one another, and doing everything they can to do good for one another. This is enabled by the primary truth that we are God's renovation project:

"Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it" (5:23-24).

As we read 1 Thessalonians, be encouraged! It's a book that reminds us of God's power at work through the good news of Jesus. Our Lord Jesus Christ will return and it's important to stay awake and live the life He died to give us and now calls us live. One Thessalonians stirs us to journey together and look out for each other. It shows us how God is working in and through us by the power of the Spirit through hearing the gospel of Jesus.

NAVIGATE

Navigate Devotional is a podcast that's designed to help you engage with the God of the Bible.



Each episode is a 10 minute devotional released each day Monday to Friday. We hope that this can be a part of your routine each day as you encounter God.

You can find Navigate by searching Navigate Devotional on Spotify or go to our website WWW.navigatedevotional.com.

RENOVATE

Renovate is an 8 week video series exploring the habits of Jesus' life.



Each video is a 5 minutes reflection on different habits of Jesus' life and how by practicing his habits we can be renovated into his likeness.

We hope that you will take up God's invitation to participate with Him in the ongoing renewal of our inner self – our spiritual core, the place of thought and feeling, of will and character – and see our inner self, renewed or literally renovate or renewed day by day into the likeness of Christ (2 Cor 4:16).

You can find the Renovate Series by following Southsides Facebook Page for weekly.



GROWTH GROUP GUIDE:

CONNECTION WITH GOD'S WORD

Each week we will be exploring the passage by trying to connect with our genuine human experience as children' of God. It's one thing to come away from the passage having learned something new and interesting about God, but that's not the goal God has in mind for those who listen to him. He wants our knowledge of him to change us.

- What does the passage reveal about what life is like for Paul or Thessalonian Church?

[When you think 'Life'. We are thinking about experience: what we are told about what life is like, God (Father/Son/Spirit), people, themselves?]

- What difference does God make in their life?
- In what ways **do** you see and feel this kind of relationship with God in your life?

[Thinking of our 'relationship with God'. Think with your heart. Although I might know this in my head, does my heart know this? Although I know this to be true of the Christian experience, is this my experience? Although I know this, do I live this way?]

- In what ways **don't** you see and feel this kind of relationship with God in your life?
- What has God put on your heart from this passage that encourages you to stay the path?

[Thinking signature move. Is there a particular signature move or behaviour change that would reflect the impact of God's word in your life?]

- Turn your answer to question 5 into a prayer for yourself and the group.

WEEK 1: WHERE THE JOURNEY BEGAN

PERSONAL GROWTH 1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-10

1 Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you. 2 We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. 3 We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 4 For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. 6 You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. 7 And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, 9 for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.



TUNE INTO NAVIGATE
DEVOTIONAL PODCAST



KEEP AN EYE OUT ON FACEBOOK
FOR THIS WEEKS RENOVATE VIDEO

GROWTH GROUP:

1 THESSALONIANS 1:1-10

Core Idea: The gospel is the powerful word of God that saves and transforms His chosen people.

Core Commitment:

Southside's core Magnification commitment, "*I will seek to magnify God...*

a. By offering my life to God as a living sacrifice.

b. By gathering with God's people every week to sing, pray and sit under his word, so that I can regularly re-orbit my heart and life around him and his purposes."

1. What does the passage reveal about what life is like for Paul or Thessalonian Church?

2. What difference does God make in their life?

3. In what ways **do** you see and feel this kind of relationship with God in your life?

4. In what ways **don't** you see and feel this kind of relationship with God in your life?

5. What has God put on your heart from this passage that encourages you to stay the path?

Turn your answer to question 5 into a prayer for yourself and the group.

PRAYER:

How has God been at work in your life this week?

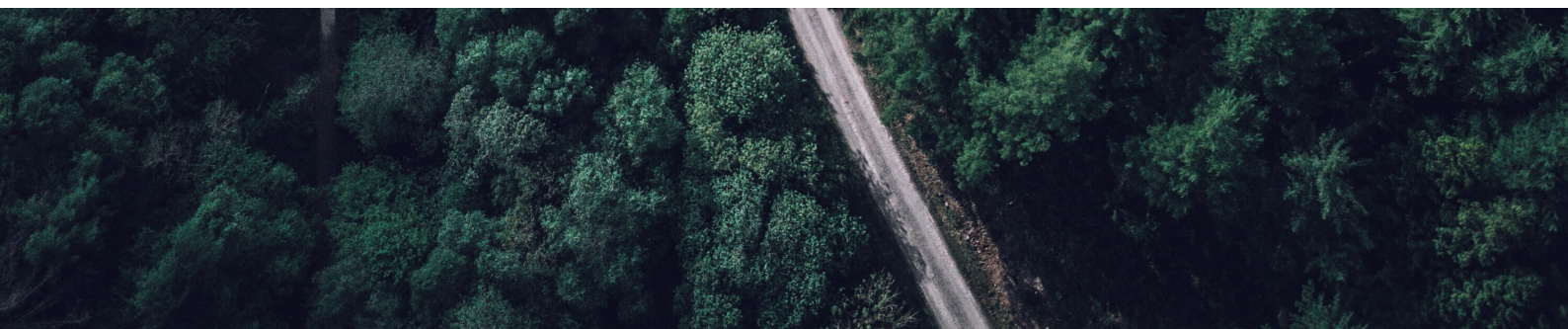
How are you going with God?

How are you going with others God has placed in your life?

Something God's put on your heart from the passage?

Who are the people you are on mission to?

What can we pray for them this week?



WEEK 2: THE MISSION

PERSONAL GROWTH 1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-16

2 You know, brothers and sisters, that our visit to you was not without results. 2 We had previously suffered and been treated outrageously in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in the face of strong opposition. 3 For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you. 4 On the contrary, we speak as those approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts. 5 You know we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness. 6 We were not looking for praise from people, not from you or anyone else, even though as apostles of Christ we could have asserted our authority. 7 Instead, we were like young children among you. Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, 8 so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well. 9 Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. 10 You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. 11 For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, 12 encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.



NAVIGATE

TUNE INTO NAVIGATE
DEVOTIONAL PODCAST



RENOVATE

KEEP AN EYE OUT ON FACEBOOK
FOR THIS WEEKS RENOVATE VIDEO

GROWTH GROUP:

1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-16

Core Idea: The mission of God is to pursue gospel outcomes through sharing the gospel and your life even in the face of opposition.

Core Commitment:

Southside's core Mission commitment, *"I will seek to live on mission*

- a. By being involved in the lives of non-Christians and sharing the gospel with them at every opportunity.
- b. By praying for five non-Christians each year and inviting them to church when and where appropriate."

1. What does the passage reveal about what life is like for Paul or Thessalonian Church?

2. What difference does God make in their life?

3. In what ways **do** you see and feel this kind of relationship with God in your life?

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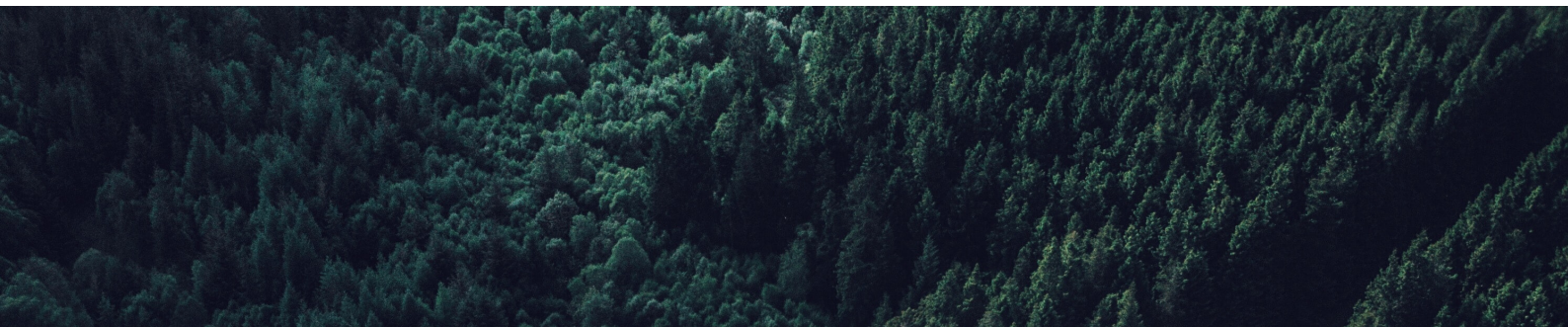
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How are you going with others God has placed in your life?

Something God's put on your heart from the passage?

Who are the people you are on mission to?

What can we pray for them this week?



WEEK 3: THE BATTLE

PERSONAL GROWTH 1 THESSALONIANS 2:17-3:13

6 But Timothy has just now come to us from you and has brought good news about your faith and love. He has told us that you always have pleasant memories of us and that you long to see us, just as we also long to see you.

7 Therefore, brothers and sisters, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. 8 For now we really live, since you are standing firm in the Lord. 9 How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you? 10 Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith. 11 Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. 12 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. 13 May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.



NAVIGATE

TUNE INTO NAVIGATE
DEVOTIONAL PODCAST



RENOVATE

KEEP AN EYE OUT ON FACEBOOK
FOR THIS WEEKS RENOVATE VIDEO

GROWTH GROUP:

1 THESSALONIANS 2:17-3:13

Core Idea: The goal of Christianity isn't simply to get in to heaven, but to grow and stay the path in the face of Satan and trials - until Jesus returns.

Core Commitment:

Southside's core Membership commitment, *"I will seek to express my membership*

- a. By connecting with and caring for others in the Southside community.
- b. By submitting myself to the care and instruction provided by those in leadership."

1. What does the passage reveal about what life is like for Paul or Thessalonian Church?

2. What difference does God make in their life?

3. In what ways **do** you see and feel this kind of relationship with God in your life?

4. In what ways **don't** you see and feel this kind of relationship with God in your life?

5. What has God put on your heart from this passage that encourages you to stay the path?

Turn your answer to question 5 into a prayer for yourself and the group.

PRAYER:

How has God been at work in your life this week?

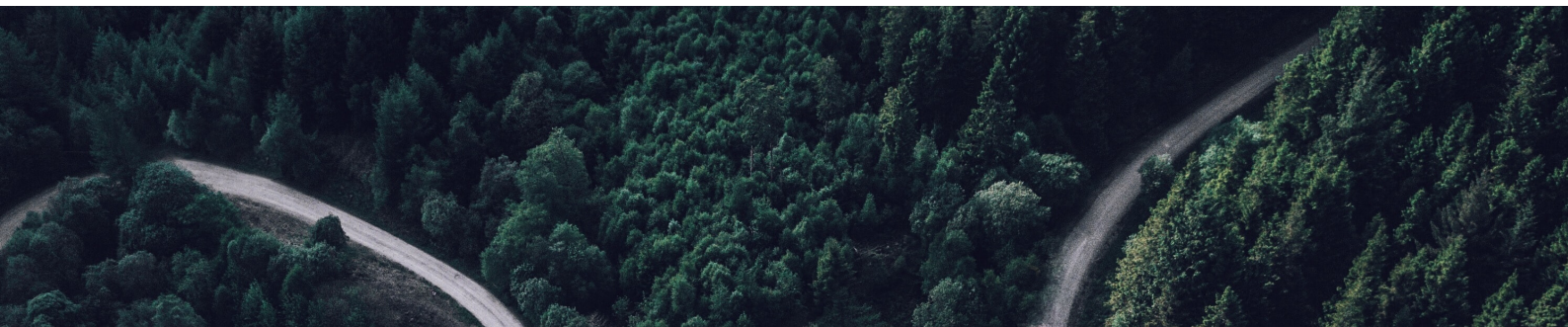
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Something God's put on your heart from the passage?

Who are the people you are on mission to?

What can we pray for them this week?



WEEK 4: THE TRANSFORMED LIFE

PERSONAL GROWTH 1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-12

1 As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. 2 For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. 3 It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, 5 not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; 6 and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. 7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. 8 Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit. 9 Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. 10 And in fact, you do love all of God’s family throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more, 11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, 12 so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.



TUNE INTO NAVIGATE
DEVOTIONAL PODCAST



KEEP AN EYE OUT ON FACEBOOK
FOR THIS WEEKS RENOVATE VIDEO

GROWTH GROUP:

1 THESSALONIANS 4:1-12

Core Idea: The life of the Christian is one that pleases God by living a life of holiness and love not impurity and lust.

Core Commitment:

Southside's core Maturity commitment: *I will seek to mature in Christ-likeness*

a. By taking off the old self and putting on the new self.

b. By being an active member of a Growth Group in which I can come to know and be like Christ as we study his word together.

1. What does the passage reveal about what life is like for Paul or Thessalonian Church?

2. What difference does God make in their life?

3. In what ways **do** you see and feel this kind of relationship with God in your life?

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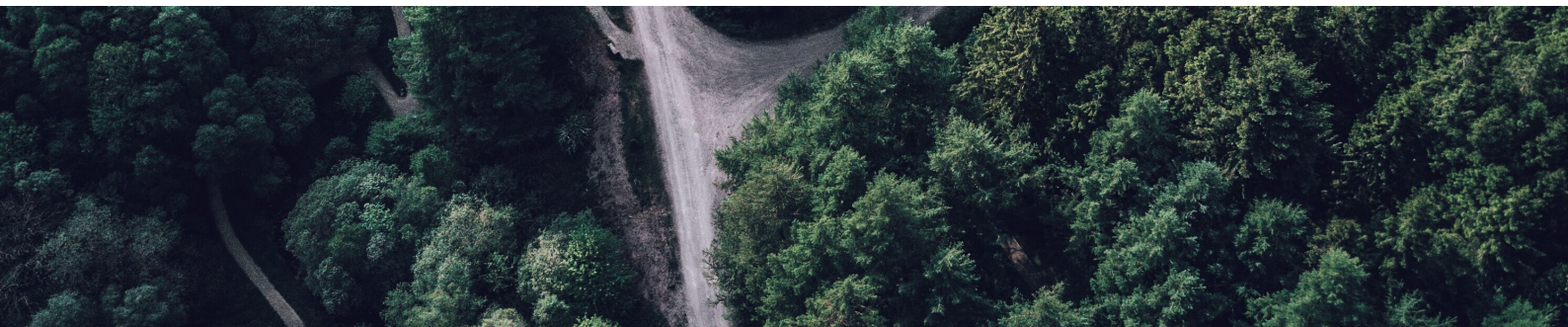
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Who are the people you are on mission to?

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EXTRA NOTES

A series of horizontal lines for writing notes, starting from the top of the page below the 'EXTRA NOTES' header and extending to the bottom of the page.



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