

Growing Our Hearts

Toward God



Daily Devotionals to Help You Grow

There is nothing quite like the power of a clearly-defined path, to get you where you need to go—whether you're walking a trail in the woods, or trying to influence others for Christ.

Invest and Invite

God calls each of us as disciples, to partner with Him in the process of changing lives. At Southeastern, our approach is simple: *Invest and Invite*.

Our strategy of influencing others is relational. It means genuinely caring for people, investing the energy and effort to build redemptive relationships. It entails bringing people into contact with other Christ-followers and events that will help lead them to Christ.

Pit Stop, on Wednesday evenings, is an intentional effort to provide a "safe," engaging, and helpful environment for people to find the spiritual encouragement and resources needed for daily life. Southeastern members are encouraged to leverage this mid-week opportunity in their effort to partner with God in "Growing Hearts Toward God."

Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.

- 1 Thessalonians 2:8, TNIV

MONDAY

Christ-followers provide a demonstration of the Gospel in their own lives.

Matthew 5:13-16

1. What purpose did salt and light play in Jesus' time, and what impact did Jesus' remarks likely have on His disciples?
2. Have you been impacted by a salty Christian? If so, how?
3. How can we, as salt, lose our saltiness? What are the ramifications of losing our saltiness?
4. Where do you have an opportunity to be salt and light? What challenges have you run into? What results have you seen?

Sharing Jesus with others involves our lives as well as our lips. People need a *demonstration* as well as an *explanation* of the gospel. In fact, the only way some people will see Jesus is by first seeing Him in your own life.

Reflect: When it comes to being salt in the world, the issue is not, "Will I make any difference?" Salt, by its very nature, always makes a difference. The question is, "Will I accept my role?" Are you being salty? Drawing attention to God?

How can you remind yourself throughout the week that God has placed you strategically where you are?

TUESDAY

Christ-followers nurture redemptive relationships with outsiders.

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

1. Paul uses various metaphors in this passage to describe his ministry among the Thessalonians. What do these word pictures imply as to what is involved in building redemptive relationships with others? Which of these elements comes easier to you? Which is more difficult?
2. Amazingly, some of the most "unlikely" people were attracted to Jesus—without his condoning their sin or compromising any of his convictions. How was this possible? Unfortunately, the average Christian or church seems just the opposite. What can you (or we) do to be more like Jesus in this regard?
3. What lifestyle change or adjustment would help you better build bridges with outsiders? How could you partner with others (perhaps your small group) to do so?

Are you marking lives, or just marking time? You've got to decide whether you want your life to be about *impressing* people or *impacting* them—something you can't do ~~without~~ from a distance.

Thanksgiving: Thank God for the people who significantly impacted your life for Christ. Ask God for the willingness to take the time and effort to do the same for someone else.

Southeastern's Mission: "Growing Hearts Toward God."

"But grow in the grace and knowledge
of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."
- 2 Peter 3:18

WEDNESDAY

Christ-followers leverage opportunities
to bring people to Jesus.

Luke 5:18-26

1. This passage is full of irony: The man came for *physical* healing, but received much more than he imagined. Jesus was the only one who could heal, but used *people* in the process. Discuss these ironies (and any others you find), and the ramifications of this passage in terms of helping people get to Jesus today.
2. What was required on the part of the paralytic, in order to get the help he needed? On the part of the paralytic's friends?
3. How do the elements in this passage fit with the "Invest & Invite" approach we're implementing — particularly in terms of our mid-week *Pit Stop*?

The Bible is full of stories about God's ability to do amazing things through ordinary people. *Pit Stop* provides a safe setting for people to find hope and receive help for a range of life-situations—from everyday challenges to more severe crises. It's dependent on Christ-followers who recognize that every human being has a "mat," and are willing to do what they can to help them find the One who offers the help they need.

Consider: What role are you playing (or can you play) in Southeastern's overall process of leading people into a growing relationship with Christ?

THURSDAY

Christ-followers view themselves
as partners in God's work.

John 4:27-38

1. What did Jesus mean when He said that His food was to do the will of the Father (vv 32, 34)? How is this true for you? In what way do you need to grow in this area?
2. What did the disciples learn from this encounter—about the Samaritan woman? About Jesus? About themselves? About their mission?
3. Only God can change hearts and lives, but we have the opportunity to partner with Him in that work. What are the implications of Jesus' concluding words in terms of being a part of His work in the world (verses 35-38)?

Homework: Make a list of the people with whom you have the best and most consistent opportunity to influence for Christ.

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|----|----|
| 1. | 4. |
| 2. | 5. |
| 3. | 6. |

Keep in mind that it's not your responsibility (or even within your ability!) to change the people on your list. But it is your task to live in such a way that what you do and what you say may be used by God to bring them to Himself.

FRIDAY

Christ-followers pray fervently
for open doors and open hearts.

Colossians 4:2-6

1. What does Paul want the Colossians to pray for? What makes this kind of prayer vital to someone wanting to live as salt and light?
2. Compare this passage with 1 Peter 3:15-16. What does it mean to have conversation that is "full of grace" and "seasoned with salt?" What do you think the Lord would have you do to better reflect these two qualities in your conversation with outsiders?
3. Look for opportunities to apply the principles in these two passages this week. Consciously pray, "Lord, what do you want in this situation? What should I say to this person?"

Regardless of our individual personalities, we've all got to be alert, watching for opportunities to talk to people about Christ. Sometimes that will require taking risks, along with the willingness to be creative in how we raise such critically important topics of conversation.

Prayer: Ask God for the courage and sensitivity to start spiritual conversations with those around you. Ask Him to teach you how to put your faith in plain everyday words so that you can relate your faith in a meaningful way.