

GBC LIFE GROUP RESOURCES 2025

Series: Lives Changed by Jesus

Introduction to GBC Life Group Resources

Life Groups are a critical ministry of our life together at Gymea Baptist Church where we want everyone to find their place in God's family and in God's mission. These resources are produced each Monday as a companion to the sermon series. Choosing to use these resources facilitates our sense of community as we share together around common themes and passages.

Each week's resource includes a brief overview of the sermon series and of the sermon (which can be accessed on GBC's YouTube channel or via your favourite podcast platform), along with a series of activities to do together. Don't forget that The Big Ill podcast comes out mid-week as another companion to the sermon.

These range from questions to ask, prayers to pray, practices to try, and biblical passages to read (usually in the time between Life Group meetings). Feel free to pick and choose what will work well for your group – you don't have to do everything!

We also include additional things that we are encouraging our Life Group leaders, as leaders of GBC, to be sharing with your groups. These include reflecting on a particular mission commitment of GBC, promoting and praying for GBC initiatives, and celebrating what God is doing in and through our community of faith.

If you have feedback on these resources please contact Nicole Jones at LifeGroups@gymeabaptist.org.au.



Lives Changed by Jesus: A Brief Introduction

This is our theme for 2025 and we will be returning to it several times over the course of the year. The theme is grounded in our strategic priorities of Community Engagement and Spiritual Journey and seeks to focus on the ongoing conversion we experience as followers of Jesus.

In this first sermon series, we will be focusing on characteristics that demonstrate a life changed by Jesus.

A Brief Overview of This Week's Sermon

Key Text(s): Matthew 18:21-35

We come to one of the central demonstrations of a life changed by Jesus: forgiveness. Whatever else people may know about Christianity it is almost certain that forgiveness would be at the top of the list. And there is good reason for this!

In Matthew 18, Jesus has been teaching about restoration: warning against causing others to stumble, emphasising the importance of seeking and finding those who are lost to the community, and teaching on how to handle sin in the church. In this context Peter comes to Jesus with a question, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Peter has obviously been paying attention – he knows that it's going to be more than once! And the use of "seven" is an open number, signifying completeness. Yet, the question remains, "How many times?"

Jesus responds with a statement and a parable. The statement is a direct response to the question – "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times." And this is also an "open" number. I don't believe Jesus actually means once someone sins a seventy-eighth time (or a four hundred and ninety-first time).

The parable, however, is indirect (as all parables are) and doesn't deal with how many times at all!

The story is quite simple. A king is settling accounts with his servants (see Matthew 25:14-30 for an example of what is happening), beginning with a servant who owes him "ten thousand bags of gold". A "bag of gold" is a translation of a "talent"; a unit of currency representing twenty years of a day labourer's wage! In other words, this servant owes his master the equivalent of 200, 000 years of a day labourer's wage! It might be better to translate it as "a gazillion dollars". The point is that this is an unpayable debt.

Unsurprisingly, the man is unable to pay this astronomical debt and, as a result the king orders the servant, his wife, children, and all he owns to be sold to repay (some of) the debt. This would have been a drop in the bucket towards what he owed.

The servant falls on his knees and begs the king, "Be patient with me, and I will pay back everything." Which is ridiculous; he cannot repay this debt no matter how much time he was given! However, the king has pity upon him, cancels the debt, and let him go. This motivation (pity/compassion), action (cancelling the debt), and consequence (let him go) is in stark contrast to the servant's actions.

For when he went out, he bumped into a fellow servant who owed him one hundred silver coins – about three or four months wage; not an insignificant amount. He grabbed him, began to choke him, and demanded he repay the debt.

When his fellow servant echoes what he himself had said to the king in the last scene – falls to his knees and begs for more time – he refuses and has him thrown in jail until he can repay the debt. His motivation is what is owed to him and leads to his action (refusing) and the consequence (throwing him in prison).

His fellow servants are outraged by his actions and report him to the king who calls him into his presence. "You wicked servant!" he begins – and it is noteworthy that the great debt accrued was not enough to characterise the man as wicked – it is only his lack of mercy! The king reminds him that he forgave the gazillion dollar debt when he begged him to (Which is not strictly true – he begged for more time. The king responded to his true need). Outraged himself, the king throws the servant into prison to be tortured until he pays off a gazillion dollars.

Jesus concludes, "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart." Any questions?

The connection between forgiveness received and forgiveness granted is found throughout the gospel, most notably in the Lord's Prayer – "forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12, 14-15). Though Jesus is using hyperbole, the point is crystal clear: forgiveness of those who sin against us is a non-negotiable for followers of Jesus.

Forgiveness is not necessarily absolute and immediate, but is a journey that we must embark on. Nor is forgiveness easy. There are any number of complicating factors such as whether the person who sins against us is repentant or not, the severity of the sin against us, and how we negotiate and navigate the consequences that some actions have. It is perhaps best thought of as how we think about grief. It is not something we walk away from, but something we walk alongside of; sometimes the chasm is close at hand, at other times it is further away, sometimes it is impossibly deep and other times shallow, but it is always there. What is clear is that, regardless of the difficulties of forgiving others, we must.

And the ultimate reason is that our Father in heaven has forgiven us our great debt – an unpayable debt – out of compassion, he has cancelled the debt (rather than giving us more time to prove ourselves!), and has let us go. We have the freedom to emulate his compassion in our interaction with those who sin against us or to focus on what is owed to us ... The parable makes it clear that it is the former that our Father wishes us to freely step into!

Questions to Ask

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. What are some of the factors that make forgiveness so difficult?
3. Marc speculated that neither the fellow servants nor the king would have been so outraged if the first servant had shown a little mercy and allowed his fellow servant the time he required to pay the debt. It would not have been a precise parallel to the king's mercy, but it would have been a big step in the right direction! What steps might we take to begin to forgive others that, while not all the way there, are nonetheless steps in the right direction?
4. How has your awareness of God's forgiveness influence your willingness and ability to forgive others?
5. Have you ever experienced the forgiveness of someone else? How has that shaped you as a follower of Jesus?
6. What advice would you give to someone about forgiving others?

A Prayer to Pray

Continue to pray for each other that the Holy Spirit would identify an area of our lives that He wants to align more closely over the course of 2025.

A Practice to Try

If there is someone who you need to forgive, take your next faithful step to doing so: talk with someone, pray, etc.

Readings to Read This Week

The following passages reflect on the connection between God's forgiveness of our sins and our forgiveness of others.

Matthew 16:18-19; 18:18

Luke 6:27-36, 37

Luke 7:36-50

Colossians 3:12-14

John 20:19-23

A Mission Commitment to Reflect on

Our theme – Lives Changed by Jesus – is also our vision as a community of faith and has two areas of focus. First, that we might see lives changed for the first time by placing their faith in Jesus. Second, that we might see change in our lives as we continue to follow Jesus. We hope to keep both of these in view over the course of the year.

There may be opportunity to identify those in our lives who are becoming more open to faith or who are exploring faith in Jesus who we might more prayerfully support and encourage this year.

A GBC Initiative to Promote/Celebrate

Each week we will provide you with a key aspect of our community news that we would encourage you to remind your Life Group about.

This coming Saturday we are holding a Working Bee in the morning (8:00-12:00) to clean up the building – in preparation for Easter and to demonstrate, in a small way, our care for those who visit. If you are able to join us for an hour or so, you can let Marjy know and/or sign up via Link Tree!

[CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP TO WORKING BEE](#)

Additional Resources:

The mission commitments of GBC

We have made several references to the mission commitments of GBC. This is the title we have given to our vision, purpose, and values. These will no doubt be familiar to you, but we thought it might be helpful to provide a clear overview of them.

Our mission commitments begin with John 20:21, “As the Father sent me, I am sending you.”

These words contain a central belief about what we are called to as a community of faith: that we are to continue the ministry and mission of Jesus to restore and renew everything according to the will of the Father and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

As we reflected on this commission, we formulated a mission statement to attempt to summarise what we wanted to do. While we don’t refer to it very often, it is helpful to see the progression of our thought. **The mission we formulated was:**

Everywhere we go and in everything we do, we will invite everyone to follow Jesus.

Taking the pattern we find in the Gospels we affirm that anyone can begin to follow Jesus; regardless of what they believe about him, what they know about him, and without changing their lives. When Jesus called his first disciples, he demanded none of these things; only inviting them to follow him. Over time they learned about him which challenged their beliefs about him and raised the implications for their lives, but initially, they only needed to be willing to follow.

The individual transformation that comes as people place their trust in Jesus and the commission that he has sent us to participate in led to a simple **vision statement; what we want to see. *We want to see lives changed by Jesus.***

All of this took shape in our purpose as a community of faith – our “why”. ***To be a community of faith who courageously take up the invitation of God the Father to participate in His grand plan to restore and renew all things in Christ Jesus through the enabling presence of the Holy Spirit.***

It was only as we gained clarity on our purpose that we identified a set of values that we believed were aligned with these mission commitments. The five values we identified are:

- To be **On-Purpose**. Intentional to create margins in our lives to participate in God’s mission.
- To be **Big-Hearted**. Generosity in all our resources as a reflection of God’s own generosity to us is a central value.
- To be **Whole-Life Learners**. As followers of Jesus we are called to ongoing transformation of our lives; learning to be more like Jesus. This also invites humility as we recognise our ongoing need of change.
- To be **Others-Focused**. To demonstrate love and care to others, over and above ourselves is a key characteristic of followers of Jesus.
- To be **Trust-Worthy**. We don’t want to get in the way as people begin to follow Jesus. We want to reflect this value in our commitment to being a Safe Church.

These are the mission commitments that we hope will serve to give us some common language that reminds us of our unity together as followers of Jesus and the community of faith here at GBC.