

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 Gynea 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): Psalm 112

In Psalm 112 the psalmist provides a caricature of the upright or righteous person; emphasising a single practice as the practice that defines the upright person. And that practice is not one or more of the ten commandments, or ritual observance, but generosity (vv. 5, 9). Generosity is described as the essential, foundational practice of the righteous and it is grounded in God's own generosity.

Psalm 111 is a companion to Psalm 112 – they are meant to be read together. Both open with "Praise the Lord", both are acrostics (following the letters of the Hebrew alphabet), and both share a number of key phrases and ideas that are expressed in parallel places in the psalm. For example, in Psalm 111 the psalmist focuses on one specific action of God above all others: his provision of food and redemption. In other words, his generosity.

These psalms are not the only place where God's generosity is evident. It is first demonstrated in the created order; given to all whether they acknowledge God or not. It continues throughout his interactions with his people and is expressed most fully in giving his Son to save us! Psalm 112 urges the same kind of generosity in God's people. It is, then, evidence of a life changed.

However, it is more than something practiced by those who have been changed; it is also a practice that Jesus uses to change us. It's a bit of a "chicken or the egg" thing! So, how does Jesus use financial generosity to change us? [Note: There are, of course, other ways we can be generous, but the Psalm focuses on financial generosity and we will too.] There are at least four ways.

First, the very fact that God is generous means that when we act generously, we are acting like God. It is a godly activity and, as such, Jesus can use it to shape our character. We all know the importance of habits – good and bad – and a good habit shapes us in profound ways. How much more so when Jesus is involved!

Second, Jesus uses our financial generosity to erode our self-sufficiency. In our culture, self-sufficiency and independence are held as key values. We give a great deal of authority to self-determination. A godly generosity – which begins with the Psalm 111 affirmation that all we have is from God – erodes that self-sufficiency. It reminds us that we are not self-made people.

Third, Jesus uses our financial generosity to deepen our trust in God. The lead-up to verse 9 – "They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor" – is striking. The context is bad news and a world that is shaking, with foes who look like they will be triumphant, when fear is palpable. It is in that context that the upright scatter gifts freely to the poor! This is a transformed generosity! The winds of financial fear howl at us that we don't have enough and that we won't have enough. The righteous declare that "God is enough" and scatter what they have to those who are shaking in fear. Whenever we give, even a small amount, we are declaring that we have more than enough. This is a powerful practice that Jesus can use to more firmly build our security in God.

Fourth, Jesus uses financial generosity to ground our love for God in actions. Last week we looked at 1 John 3:16-18. Verse 17 refers to those with material possessions and asks how, if someone has them but doesn't help someone in need, the love of God can be in them? If generosity is a godly activity, then generosity demonstrates our delight in his commands, our fear of the Lord, and our love for him.

So, what should we do? If you do not regularly give financially, begin to do so – to the local church, to a charity that is meaningful to you, to May Mission Month, to someone who needs support. Begin to practice this godly way of life and see what Jesus does. And if you have been in the practice of giving, why not pause and ask Jesus if he wishes to transform you more through this practice. Reflect on the four ways and ask if your godliness is increasing as a result of your giving, if your self-sufficiency is eroding, if your trust in deepening, and if your love is evident.

Questions to Ask

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. Read Psalms 111 & 112 and compare them. What parallels do you see?

3. How has financial generosity contributed to your growth as a follower of Jesus?
4. What sorts of things have you done (or could you do) to foster financial generosity in your life in order that Jesus might transform you? Are there principles you consider when you think about financial generosity?
5. If a new believer, or someone who was beginning to explore faith, asked your advice on one thing to do to begin financial generosity, what might you say to them?

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

Select one of the pieces of advice from Question 4 and put it into practice as a group this week.

Readings to Read This Week

The following passages reflect generosity. As you read them, use the four questions we have adapted to Read the Bible Together:

1. What stood out to you?
2. What questions does this passage raise?
3. What is God inviting you to in this passage?
4. Who can you tell what you have learned?

Psalms 111

Matthew 5:43-45

Matthew 18:21-35

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

Matthew 20:1-16

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.

We have set aside **March 16 as Baptism Sunday**. If anyone in your group would like to be baptised or is interested in learning more about what that means, have them contact one of the pastoral staff or fill in the Expression of Interest on Link Tree or click for [EOI Baptism HERE](#).

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.