

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 119

This week our topic is “Delighting in the Word of God”. Scripture has been a key part of Christian practice from the beginning and reflects the deep commitment to the Word of God by the Jewish people. In Psalm 119 the psalmist expresses this commitment. It is an acrostic psalm with each of the stanzas associated with consecutive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. It is the longest psalm in the psalter and its theme is the Word of God and the psalmist's delight in it.

The sermon this week was framed around a similar acrostic pattern. Marc briefly reflected on twenty-two things about Scripture. In brief they were:

A is for Author. We believe that Scripture is authored by God (through the participation of over forty people who contributed to them).

B is for Beautiful. Beauty compels and draws us and Scripture is filled with beauty; stories, poems, prayers, etc.

C is for Curated. The beautiful stories, poems, prayers, etc. have been curated by God himself – what we often call inspiration – to reveal his character, plans, and purposes to us.

D is for Daily. Maybe “regular” would be a better word to use, but the people of God have, from the beginning, been urged to reflect on God's word daily (Deut. 6:4-9).

E is for Eternal. The relevance of the Word of God is eternal; a reflection of the God who was, and is, and is to come.

F is for Foundational. The people of God have consistently turned to God's Word to determine their values, priorities, behaviours, ethics, and morality. It is a foundation for our engagement with the world.

G is for God-breathed. Breath is life and the Word is associated with the very breath of God.

H is for Hard work. There are some skills and competencies that can greatly aid our ability to understand the Word; it is not just a matter of some mysterious spiritual transaction.

I is for Interpretation. We are aiming for faithful interpretation (rather than the “right” interpretation) and the many interpretive traditions are a reflection of God's eternity as much as anything.

J is for Jesus. Jesus' teaching ministry was grounded in Scripture and reflects a deep understanding of it.

K is for Kingdom. There are many themes that we can fruitfully trace in Scripture, but kingdom – God's order, reign, and rule – is a good one. It's what Jesus came proclaiming!

L is for Living. Hebrews 4:12 describes the Word as living and active. This should not surprise us, since it is the Word of the living and active God.

M is for Museum. Museums are not just places where old stuff is displayed, but are open, accessible places that seek to interpret and education our identity; where we've come from and where we might be going. Scripture does the same.

N is for Narrative. It is striking that God chose to reveal himself primarily in stories which are invitational texts; inviting us to engage with them. They are so different from propositions!

O is for Open. The Bible is not only for the people of God, but for anyone who wants to hear from God.

P is for Powerful. The Word of God changes us. Psalm 119:9, for example, promises that living according to the Word will keep a young person on the path of purity.

(Twenty-two letters, rather than twenty-six means Q, X, Y, and Z can be skipped!).

R is for Relevant. We can sometimes allow our societal narrative influence us; that the church and the Bible is irrelevant. As the living Word of the living God, nothing could be further from the truth!

S is for Spirit. The Holy Spirit superintends over us as we engage with Scripture; speaking to us.

T is for Translatable. The power of the Bible is retained regardless of the language in which it is translated! This is further evidence of the living and active author.

U is for Ubiquitous. Something that is ubiquitous is everywhere and the Bible is one of the most influential texts in Western history. Its influence is still felt!

V is for Verifiable. There are many historical connections that provide us with confidence in Scripture.

W is for Wonderful. For all the reasons listed, the Bible is a wonderful gift to us!

Scripture changes us because it is God's Word; the living and active one. As such we are invited to explore and should come to the Word with some expectancy that we will encounter God. We may need to learn or deepen some skills and competencies as we go, but we have been given a gift from God and are invited to listen!

Questions to Ask

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. How has the Bible contributed to your growth as a follower of Jesus?
3. What sorts of things have you done (or could you do) to foster engagement with the Bible in order that Jesus might transform you? Are there principles you consider when you think about reading/studying the Bible?
4. Has there been someone in your life who has been an inspiration and example to you in engagement with Scripture? Describe them and what you have learned.
5. If a new believer, or someone who was beginning to explore faith, asked your advice on one thing to do to begin reading the Bible, 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 5 and put it into practice as a group this week.

Readings to Read This Week

This week, read Psalm 119 and reflect carefully on what it has to say about the Word. 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?

Psalm 119:1-32

Psalm 119:33-72

Psalm 119:73-104

Psalm 119:105-144

Psalm 119:145-176

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.

Over the last few weeks we have been interviewing people from our community of faith who have been willing to speak about how a particular practice has changed them. The answers they have given to the three questions (How has this changed you? What have you done to foster that change? What advice would you give to someone else?) are not the “right” answers, but provide a touch point for us to continue thinking about them.

We have a number of topics coming up where we are looking for people who might be willing to share a bit with our congregation. If there are people in your group who might be willing to do so, please let Marc know at Marc.Rader@gymeabaptist.org.au. The topics are: Discerning the Voice of God, Reconciliation/Forgiveness, Being Prepared to Give an Answer, Making Disciples.

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.