

# GBC LIFE GROUP RESOURCES 2024

## Series: Our Extra Ordinary Life Together

### Introduction to GBC Life Group Resources

Life Groups are a critical ministry of our extra ordinary life together at Gynea Baptist Church. 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!

In 2024 we have also begun to include some additional information that we are encouraging our Life Group leaders, as leaders of GBC, to be sharing with your group. 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 email Nicole Jones: [office@gymeabaptist.org.au](mailto:office@gymeabaptist.org.au).



### While We Wait–Studies in Chronicles

While We Wait is our Old Testament series for 2024 and we will be dipping in and out of Chronicles over the course of the year. This is the third block and will run through to early November.

Chronicles was written to provide God's people with a model for how to live while they were waiting, with increasing desperation, for the promises of God to be fulfilled. Part of our extra ordinary life together is to encourage one another while we wait for the promises of God to restore and renew all things in Christ Jesus to be fulfilled. I believe that there are important and timely lessons for us to learn in Chronicles and look forward to diving more deeply into this text over the course of the year.

### A Brief Overview of This Week's Sermon

Key Text(s): 2 Chronicles 28:1-27

We have moved forward almost a hundred years to the late 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE and king Ahaz of Judah whose reign is judged poorly by the Chronicler. In the three places Ahaz's reign is reflected upon (2 Kings 16, Isaiah 7, and here) there is only one event that is remembered; his response to the Syro-Ephraimite crisis. This was, historically speaking, a bit like 9/11 – forever changing the ancient near east.

In the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century BCE a coalition of kings in Canaan, including the king of Israel, had withstood the might of Assyria, preserving their independence and frustrating Assyrian imperial aspirations. In Ahaz's time, Assyria was once again ascendant under the rule of Tiglath-Pileser III. A number of kings in the region determined to form another coalition. Led by Pekah, king of Israel, and Rezin, king of Aram, this coalition put pressure on Ahaz to join. For reasons that are not clear, Ahaz refused, and in response, the coalition attacked him to force his acquiescence. Judah was overwhelmed and there was soon an army at the gates of Jerusalem. It was an impossible situation.

Then, against all expectations, Ahaz negotiated a way forward. The armies withdrew and peace was restored. The miraculous outcome – and it was miraculous, even becoming part of a popular mythology that Jerusalem would never fall – was the sort of outcome that we usually associate with seeking the Lord. However, sometimes it isn't the destination, but the journey that matters.

Ahaz achieved this impossible peace, not by trusting in the Lord, but in turning to the Assyrians and the gods of the surrounding nations. He sent envoys to Tiglath-Pileser and became a vassal of the Assyrian king. This political alliance saved Ahaz when the Assyrians attacked the coalition, destroying Damascus, but it only brought Ahaz and Judah trouble.

A loss of some political independence, the payment of tribute, and the religious implications of such a relationship were the consequences of Ahaz's fundamental choice to abandon trust in God, his promises, and his purposes. The people of God were to be a conduit of God's blessing to the world and Ahaz had replaced God with Assyria as the source of blessing.

It isn't surprising then, that his reign is described as a disaster for God's people. And his actions are cast by the Chronicler as foolish in the extreme. After pursuing other gods, even making idols in the manner of the golden calf, and taking up the detestable practices of the surrounding nations, he experiences the discipline of the Lord: defeat in battle. First the Arameans and then the Israelites, inflict massive casualties on Judah, but Ahaz remains unmoved in his attachment to other gods. In fact, the Chronicler includes an account of how the Israelites – hardly examples of faithfulness – responded in obedience to the word of the Lord through a prophet. Even the Israelites are more attuned to the Lord than Ahaz! The height of his folly is when he adds the worship of the gods of the Arameans to his repertoire, on the basis that they had helped the Arameans defeat him (only to be defeated by the Assyrians!).

For those who are waiting for the Lord's promises to be fulfilled there will be times when we face intense pressure. In those times, trust is all the more important. The Chronicler also draws attention to the journey of faith; how we achieve "the good life" (in Ahaz's context, peace and safety) matters.

As followers of Jesus we have been given a model for how to live while we wait; radical trust in God's plans, submission to God's will, and a willingness to serve others; even laying down our lives. This is the path we have been set upon, even as we wait for the consummation of all things.

## Questions to Ask

1. What stood out to you in this story?
2. Ahaz faced tremendous pressure but found that he could not trust the Lord. How does pressure make trusting the Lord more difficult?
3. In our relationship with God, "It's not the destination, but the journey." Discuss.
4. Ahaz was tempted to gain his desired outcome by trusting other gods. What tempts us to abandon the way of Jesus?
5. Jesus provides us with a model of how we are to live while we wait. What aspects of his way do you find easiest to follow? What aspects are hard?

## A Prayer to Pray

1. Pray for faithfulness to the way of Jesus with an emphasis on your reflections from Question 5.

## A Practice to Try

1. Complete an audit of what you believe the good life consists of and identify how you are seeking to achieve that. Prayerfully consider where your definition and your practices are aligned with, or at odds with, the way of Jesus.

## Readings to Read This Week

The first three are the other passages that reflect on the Syro-Ephraimite crisis (the Hosea passage doesn't refer to this explicitly, but appears to fit the context). The other two catch up on the events between Jehoshaphat and Ahaz.

1. 2 Kings 16
2. Isaiah 7
3. Hosea 5:8-7:16
4. 2 Chronicles 21:4-24:16
5. 2 Chronicles 24:17-27:9

## A Mission Commitment to Reflect on

We hope that our Life Groups help people feel connected to one another and committed to our mission together as a community of faith. To that end we encourage Life Group leaders to remind your group about our mission commitments. Each week we'll draw attention to one or more of those commitments that fits neatly with the topic or theme. (See "GBC Mission Commitments" document for an overview of our commitments).

As a community of faith that wants to respond to the invitation of God, learning to seek him is a central practice. As we seek him, we will be found by him.

## 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.

1. October 20 is Baptism Sunday. If there are people in your Life Group who have not been baptised and would like to learn more there is an expression of interest on Link Tree or they can speak to one of the pastors.

## 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 to 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.