

# GBC LIFE GROUP RESOURCES 2024

## Our Extra Ordinary Life Together

### Introduction to GBC Life Group Resources

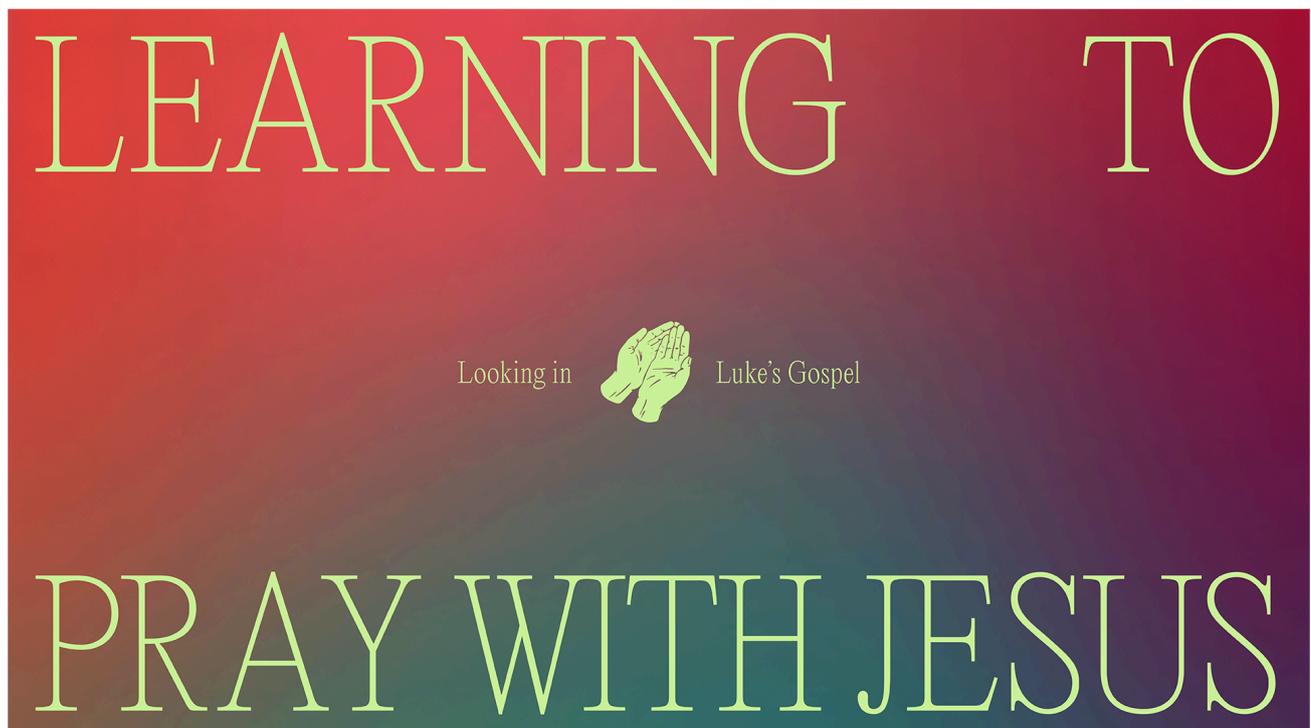
Life Groups are a critical ministry of our extra ordinary life together at Gymea Baptist Church. These resources are produced each Monday as a companion to the sermon series. Choosing to use these resources facilitates our sense of community as we share together around common themes and passages.

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).



### Learning to Pray with Jesus: A Brief Introduction

One of our goals in 2024 is to identify and begin to develop one or two spiritual practices as a community of faith that align with our purpose as a church: to help each other respond to God's invitation to join in his mission. One of the practices we have identified is prayer and, given our DNA as a church, we felt that a good place to start our exploration of this practice was through a sermon series!

Luke's gospel is again our focus, as it has been all year, in part due to the simple fact that Luke's gospel mentions prayer more often than the other gospels and, when you include Acts (also written by Luke), there is a very clear connection between the practice of prayer and the practice of the church on mission.

## A Brief Overview of This Week's Sermon

Key Text(s): Luke 18:1-8

The parables Jesus tells function as discussion starters where we are invited to carefully consider the comparison that lies at the heart of all parables. How is the kingdom of heaven like yeast that a baker works through the dough? How is God like a woman who loses one of her coins and diligently sweeps until she finds it? In this week's text, Jesus tells a parable "to show his disciples that they should always pray and not give up." This is, broadly speaking, the main application of the parable, but a careful consideration of the comparisons leads to a more specific understanding of what this means (and it goes far beyond prayer more frequently and repetitively).

The parable is simple enough: a wicked judge belatedly provides justice to a very persistent widow. It gets interesting when Jesus invites us to consider the points of comparison beginning with those between the judge and God. There are a few points of comparison that are worth noting. First, both the judge and God are the ultimate authority; there is no higher court of appeal for the widow and no higher authority than the living God. If help is going to come it's going to come from them. Second, both the judge and God are willing to provide justice; the only difference is a matter of timing. The judge is only belatedly willing whereas God is willing from the beginning.

This observation, however, draws our attention to the 'other' matter of timing in the text. Jesus assures his disciples that God will not put off his chosen ones, but will see that they receive justice and quickly. This suggests a difference between the judge and God; the judge delays but God will not. It is here that the context is important. In Luke 17:20-37 Jesus is asked when the kingdom will come. His answer is that it will arrive quickly; unexpectedly so. And that before it does, he must first be rejected and suffer many things.

This eschatological context carries over into the parable of the unjust judge. For Jesus finishes with reference to his coming and asks whether he will find faith when he does. And what does he mean? Surely, in this context, faith is the persistent commitment to cry out to God for the kingdom to come. This, then, shapes our understanding of what it means to always pray and not give up.

There is one other point of comparison and that is the widow who is compared to the chosen ones of God. It is striking that we are compared to a widow; someone who was prone to face injustice and for whom God has a special regard. Beyond that, it is her persistence that is presented as a model for us. And her persistence is unusual – to the point that the judge doesn't rule out violence from her! So committed is she to receiving justice that there's no telling what she might do! Our commitment to the kingdom is to be the same!

It appears then, that prayer represents one of any number of activities and practices that demonstrate our commitment to the kingdom, but that prayer is also meant to be a sign to each of us and to our world at large that we are committed to God's purposes – which, when they finally happen, will happen quickly. And we ought to allow those purposes to shape our prayers; that our prayers have a 'kingdom spin' to them. This is the kind of prayer that we ought to engage in and not give up on!

## Questions to Ask

1. How does the investigation of the comparisons in the parable and the eschatological context (about the return of Jesus) shape our understanding of “always praying without giving up”?
2. What causes us to give up (in any area of life, let alone in prayer)?
3. How can we pray with a kingdom spin?
4. What can you do to encourage one another to continue to pray and not give up?
5. What other activities and practices demonstrate a persistent commitment to God’s purposes?

## A Prayer to Pray

1. Pray for the eyes to see that, while God’s kingdom may be delayed, it is coming – and quickly! Pray for endurance and perseverance in prayer and every other way we demonstrate our commitment to God’s plans.

## A Practice to Try

1. Pray a bit more frequently this week than you might usually and put a ‘kingdom spin’ on your prayer.
2. If you used the breath prayer last week, share your experience of doing that

## Readings to Read This Week

1. The readings reflect God’s care for widows (and an example of a praying widow in Luke).
2. Luke 2:36-38
3. Deuteronomy 10:14-22
4. Deuteronomy 24:17-22
5. 1 Kings 17:7-24
6. 2 Kings 4:1-7

## 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 we reflect on prayer we are looking for where it aligns with and supports our engagement with our purpose: to help each other find our place in God’s mission.

## A GBC Initiative to Promote/Celebrate

1. 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.
2. This coming Sunday is HopeDrive. At our mid-year meeting we heard from Hopefield who have provided nearly 250 food parcels to this point in the year. Encourage your group to remember to add a couple of extra items to their shopping trolley this week and bring them to church – the need is great!

## 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.