



GBC Life Group Resources 2025

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

Origin Story – Genesis 1-11: A Brief Introduction

The stories, genealogies, and poems in Genesis 1-11 form a prologue of sorts to the main action of Genesis (and the entire Bible) that begins with the call of Abraham. Prologues are important to the story but are not *the* story. The things we learn in these chapters orient us inside the story that unfolds.

These origin stories are also the broadest introduction to Jesus. It is the story of *all* humanity that we encounter in these texts. For those who are beginning to explore faith this is a wonderful on-ramp to the story.

A Brief Overview of This Week's Sermon

Key Text(s): Genesis 1:1-2:3

One of the most important questions we can ask about any text of Scripture, let alone the opening chapters of Genesis, is how the original listeners would have responded to the text. This is not the only question we can ask, but is a very important place to start!

The creation account we have in Genesis 1:1-2:3, sometimes referred to as the first tablet of creation, would have landed very differently for the original listeners than it does for us. The reason is that the original listeners had a very different set of questions, beliefs, and assumptions about creation than we do. The creation account has a great deal in common with those elsewhere in the ancient near east (e.g., Egypt to Mesopotamia and everything in between). It is, however, the differences between them that are most telling.

For instance, while the opening scene of dark, watery, and chaotic conditions is common, the singular sovereignty of God is unique. In other accounts the first action of the gods is to create more gods (and this is the result of sexual activity among them). In Genesis the Lord is the only one who speaks, separates, names, makes, blesses, and assesses. In fact there are a number of places where the divine is naturalised, so to speak. This begins in earnest in Days 4-6 when God begins to fill that which is empty (after giving form to that which is formless in Days 1-3). He begins with the lights in the sky. In the ancient near east astrological deities were extremely common (think of the sun-god Ra in Egypt) with enormous power and influence over human lives. In Genesis the lights are given authority to “govern” but the limits of their influence is to mark days, times, seasons, and sacred times; to rule over the day and the night. The narrator doesn’t even use the usual terms for “sun” and “moon” but merely calls them the “greater light” and the “lesser light”.

This sidelining of the gods of the ancient near east continues in the activity of the next day when God creates the “great sea creatures” usually associated with the forces of chaos who threaten the entire created order. Here they threaten nothing but are part of the created good – and the goodness of creation is a declaration that it is fit for purpose. The blessing of God on all the creatures of the sea and the birds of the air is another act of sidelining of the gods. In particular, the gods of fertility. Fertility is not a deity to whom the people must appeal. Fertility is built in by God! Given the significant struggle the people of Israel had with fertility gods this can’t be an accident!

Day six continues this sidelining activity. After seemingly inviting the gods – “Let us make mankind in our image” – God immediately ignores them and creates mankind in *his* image. The significance of being in the image of God lies in the fact that in the ancient near east this was a term reserved for royalty; for those who were to represent the will and activity of the gods on earth. Here, this dignity is given to every human being! God blesses humanity and provides food for them. This is in stark contrast to the Mesopotamian account where humans are made to serve the gods and ease their labour!

On the seventh day, God does one more creative act. He forms a seventh day and fills it with rest; an invitation to the created order to delight in the “very good” creation.

This subversive account provides us with a few things to note in preparation for Abraham. First, it affirms in no uncertain terms that there is no one and nothing in all creation that is worthy of worship apart from God. He alone is to be trusted.

Second, humanity were created to continue the creative work of God as his representatives on the earth. While we don’t know too much about the character of God from this opening story we are given some hints. Our creative work involves giving form to that which is formless and filling that which is empty with generosity. And our creative work is not the most important thing – rest was the experience of the first human beings!

Third, this opening scene reminds us that, while sin has shattered the world, there are still fragments and vestiges of the created good around us. It contains an invitation to be on the

lookout for hints of the created good and to do what we can to strengthen and support it; to participate in God's plans.

God's call of Abraham is a step towards this restoration. But we're getting ahead of ourselves...

Questions to Ask

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. What questions do you have about this text? [If you meet prior to Wednesday, you can access the Big III question portal and ask some of these questions there.]
3. Where do you see vestiges of the created good in our broken world?
4. What might the Holy Spirit be inviting you to do to participate in the restoration of those vestiges?

A Prayer to Pray

Pray that the Holy Spirit would open your eyes to see evidence of the created good and to grant you the courage to participate in the restoration and renewal of all things.

A Practice to Try

1. Go for a walk where you can engage with nature. Pay attention to what you see and to its goodness. Give thanks for God's generous provision for you.
2. Open each day this week by asking the Holy Spirit to help you see everyone you meet as someone created in the image of God; with purpose and dignity.

Readings to Read This Week

The following psalms reflect on the created order. As you do, pay attention to the other acts of God that are "paired" with the reflection on creation.

- Psalm 19
- Psalm 89
- Psalm 104
- Psalm 136
- Psalm 148

A Mission Commitment to Reflect on

One of our strategic priorities is Community Engagement. This has a number of broad focuses, but one of them is evangelism. This series in Genesis is a broad introduction to the story that leads to Jesus. Is there someone in your life who you might invite to listen to these sermons, attend a service with you, or who might even join your Life Group?

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. Over the course of August we will be encouraging our community of faith to consider serving in the life of our church. We realise that service/volunteering can take place

outside of GBC (and want to celebrate that too!) but will be focused on internal ministries. If the opportunity arises, have a brief conversation about the ways in which serving assists our lives as followers of Jesus.

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.