

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): Philippians 2:5-11

This week's practice that demonstrates a life changed by Jesus and which Jesus uses to change us is service. In some ways this is a companion practice to love for the family of God, but with a broader application.

The text we are looking at functions as Paul's capstone example of the kind of life he is calling the church at Philippi to. The entire letter was written to address a relational breakdown between two of the women who were apparently leaders of the church (see 4:2). Paul fills the letter with examples of the kind of selfless, humble, others-focused service he is advocating: Timothy, Epaphroditus, even himself. But it is the example of Jesus that he focuses on.

Philippians 2:5-11 is usually indented in English translations to indicate that most interpreters see this as poetic. Regardless, the purpose of its inclusion is an ethical concern. 2:1-4 details precisely what Paul is hoping to achieve with this reflection.

The whole hymn turns on the contrast in verse 5. Jesus, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. This last phrase, "something to be used to his own advantage" is the translation of a single Greek word, *harpagmon*, which is only used here in the New Testament and rarely in other Greek literature. This translation is a pretty good one; capturing the essence of the term. It points to a decision not to use something that one has every right to use. Jesus had all the rights of God, but set them aside and died a humble death on a cross.

The emphasis Paul draws in this reminds us that he has a pastoral concern rather than a theological one per se. He doesn't mention Jesus' motivation or what his death accomplished, but rather, points to the humility it conveyed. (Or course, his motivation and accomplishments are implied in this reference!) This is the way of living that is rewarded by God as evidenced by Christ's exaltation – and the only reason provided in the hymn is his humble service! This is how Paul wants the Philippians and, by extension, us to live.

This kind of humble, self-sacrificing service is certainly evidence of a life that has been changed – in many regards it is the summary of Jesus' words that to gain one's life, one must lose it! It is also one of the ways Jesus uses to change us. This kind of service turns our attention to others and, as a Christ-like activity, can be used by the Holy Spirit to change us as we practice Jesus' way.

One of the things that ought to be kept in mind with all of these practices is that they require intentionality to be spiritual practices. Seeing service opportunities as being provided by Jesus and prayerfully reflecting on how he might use them to shape and transform our character is essential.

And, like all of these practices, it is good to start small. This is helpful because it is always easier to start small as we are learning something that doesn't come naturally (and this kind of service doesn't!) and also because it is only as we start small that we will be able to build the kind of spiritual muscle to be able to serve others in more radical ways. Spiritual habits build capacity as Jesus applies his power to them.

Questions to Ask

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. How has serving others contributed to your growth as a follower of Jesus?
3. What sorts of things have you done (or could you do) to foster this kind of service in your life in order that Jesus might transform you? Are there principles you consider when you think about service?
4. Has there been someone in your life who has demonstrated this kind of service? Someone who has been an inspiration and example to you? 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 serving in this way, 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

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?

Philippians 1:12-26

Philippians 2:19-24

Philippians 2:25-30

John 13:1-17

Mark 10:32-45

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](#).
- 1. On Sunday Marc interviewed two people from our community of faith who have been serving in Kids Hope. This is an excellent program that pairs a mentor with one child who requires a bit extra support in one school for one hour a week. Unlike Scripture, this is a non-proselytising program in which we serve the child, their family, and the school in providing some additional support for them. If you'd like to be involved contact Marjy Robertson who will get you in touch with Leanne Langford who coordinates the program for us. You can contact Marjy at marjy.robertson@gymeabaptist.org.au.

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.