

# 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 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).



## Our Extra Ordinary Life Together

The next several Sundays are all stand-alone sermons that share a few common themes. Most notably, how we experience the faithfulness of God through the faithfulness of others with the requisite invitation to be an expression of God's faithfulness to others.

More specifically, the themes for the next few weeks:

- November 10: "How long, O Lord?" (A reflection on Habakkuk).
- November 17: "Generosity leading to thanksgiving" (2 Corinthians 9:6-15) – Financial stewardship as an act of worship and its consequences.
- November 24: "Great is thy faithfulness" – GBC's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary and a chance to give thanks for God's faithfulness to us through others.
- December 3: A 2024 retrospective – An opportunity to reflect on how we have experienced the ongoing transformative work of Jesus in our lives. This will be the final Life Group Resource for 2024.

## A Brief Overview of This Week's Sermon

Key Text(s): Habakkuk 1:2-4

NOTE: Our special guest on Sunday was Melissa Lipsett, CEO of Baptist World Aid Australia. She shared an update on the project we have been supporting for many years in Lebanon through MERATH (the Lebanese counterpart to Baptist World Aid Australia). The conflict in the region has spilled over to Lebanon with consequences for the project. You can access the video update, the report, and prayer points [here via YouTube](#) [Time in Service - Starts at 33:12]. You may want to show the update to your group and spend some time praying for the project this week.

The book of Habakkuk records an interaction between the prophet and the Lord about the problem of evil and suffering and the Lord's apparent absence. This is a timeless question that the faithful have wrestled with from time immemorial.

In the face of violence, injustice, wrongdoing, strife, conflict, and wickedness Habakkuk asks when the Lord is going to do something (1:2-4). It is worth noting that the prophet's complaint is not about the wicked "out there", but the unfaithfulness of the people of God!

The Lord's response is troubling (1:5-11). He is going to raise up the Babylonians to punish his people! The reason this is so troubling, as Habakkuk points out to the Lord, is that the Babylonians are more wicked than God's own people (1:12-2:1)! The Lord doesn't provide a timeline for what will happen next, but affirms that his commitment to his restorative purposes are not negated by the wickedness and success of the Babylonians: "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." (2:14)

In the meantime, "the righteous person will live by his faithfulness" (2:4b). This translation (rather than "faith") captures the essence of the meaning. Given the Lord's commitment to his plans and purposes the righteous are not called just to believe that this is the case, but to demonstrate their belief in their actions – in their faithfulness to the values of the kingdom. They are to live justly, with humility and mercy, even as they wait for God's decisive action.

Habakkuk's prayer expresses a commitment to actively waiting for the Lord; trusting in his character and promises. This is not an easy commitment to maintain – it would be easy to give up – but it is the posture of faith(fulness).

As followers of Jesus we have been given the example of Jesus whose commitment to God's plans and purposes went through the path of suffering and death. We too are to express our commitment to the plans and purposes of God and persevere in our small attempts to see the kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

## Questions to Ask

1. How have you wrestled with the question of evil as a follower of Jesus?
2. In the face of a torrent of bad news in the world, how are we tempted to give up our hope in the promises of God (e.g., insulate ourselves from the bad news, internalise our faith, adopt the values and practices of success – if you can't beat 'em, join 'em – etc.)?
3. Read through Habakkuk as a group. How does the Lord encourage Habakkuk, and by extension us, to greater faithfulness?
4. "Nobody can do everything, but everyone can do something. We must do something." Discuss.

## A Prayer to Pray

1. Pray for the work of MERATH in Lebanon.
2. Commit each other to the Lord and ask for the Spirit's clear invitation to "do something" that reflects our commitment to the Lord's promises and purposes this week.

## A Practice to Try

1. Commit Habakkuk 3:17-19 to memory this week.

## Readings to Read This Week

The first three readings were referred to in the sermon. The last two reflect on the importance of caring for the poor.

1. John 16:16-33
2. 2 Corinthians 5:18-21
3. Micah 6:1-8
4. Isaiah 61:1-3
5. Amos 5:10-15

## 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. On November 24 we will be celebrating seventy-five years as a community of faith! Our theme is "Great is Thy Faithfulness" and we will be giving thanks for those who have come before us – on whose shoulders we stand – and considering how we might be faithful for the generation to come. One of the things we will be doing is taking a special thank offering that will be used to seed an endowment fund. The hope is that, by the time GBC turns a hundred, this fund will be in a position to facilitate ministry. Please prioritise being there on the 24<sup>th</sup> and prayerfully consider God's invitation to be contribute to the thank offering.

## 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.