

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.



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 20:1-30

After Jehoshaphat's disastrous coalition with the wicked king, Ahab, the kingdom was threatened by a coalition of three neighbouring nations. It may very well have been that Ahab's death – a strong ally of Jehoshaphat – was the catalyst for the attack, but if this is the case, the Chronicler is silent.

In fact, the story that follows is totally unsurprising to anyone who has been following along. Jehoshaphat, faced with an overwhelming crisis, calls on the Lord and is rescued.

However, the story is narrated in a surprising way. Jehoshaphat's prayer (20:6-12) is cast against the great promises of God. He alludes to the promises of God to Abraham, especially the inheritance of the land, as well as the promises to David, especially in the temple. The threat is not just a military defeat, but an undoing of God's promises to his people and, therefore, a challenge to the very purposes of God! His faithfulness to his promises is a demonstration of his commitment to his purposes; to make everything new. His people, planted in the land, were to be an example to the nations of what it looked

like to live in relationship with the one, true God. His king, from the line of David, was to represent the kingdom of God in the world.

Jehoshaphat casts the problem they face against this backdrop; making this military confrontation a microcosm of the struggle of God's people to participate in the coming of the kingdom in the face of their enemies.

And the salvation that the king and people experience is told in ways that are reminiscent of the exodus. The prophet who speaks after the king's prayer reminds them that the battle is the Lord's and that they will not need to fight the battle, only stand firm. This reflects the words of the Lord to Moses and the Israelites on the shores of the Red Sea (Exodus 14:10-14) and their experience in the conquest of Canaan (Joshua 10:14).

Jehoshaphat and the people go out, as the Lord has commanded, and place singers at the front of the army who sing, "Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever." This refrain is the summary of the praise of God's people in the temple (1 Chronicles 16:34; 2 Chronicles 5:13) and is found in several "historical" psalms (See Psalm 106; 107; 118; 136) in which the Lord's faithfulness to his promises and his people is the fundamental display of his love. This refrain casts the salvation they are about to experience as another example of the Lord's commitment to them and to the purposes he has for them and the world!

This story, unsurprising in its basic plot, is more surprising in the form it takes. It reminds us that God's people – and God's purposes – will always face opposition and it reminds us that this struggle is for the very purposes of God to restore all things in Christ! (There is a similarity in the book of Revelation, where the struggles of seven, small groups of house churches, who were just trying to be faithful to Jesus in their everyday life, is cast as being part of the cosmic, apocalyptic, conflict between good and evil!).

And it is this grand plan that calls for such radical faithfulness. We are not just trying to survive a single battle, but are trying to see the kingdom come! And it encourages us to cast our struggle against this same grand background; to call on God with the kind of desperation that it demands!

Questions to Ask

1. What stood out to you in this text?
2. To what degree do you see your life as participating in the grand plan of God to restore all things in Jesus? What contributes most to your sense of participation? What makes it hard to make this connection?
3. "The battle is not yours, but God's." What battles are you currently fighting? How can you face these battles more trustingly?
4. The people gathered in the temple courtyard in Jerusalem, stood before the Lord and waited for a word from the Lord, even as an army was marching towards them. What makes waiting for the Lord difficult and how can we encourage each other to wait faithfully?

A Prayer to Pray

1. Pray that you will see the big picture of God's purposes and promises in your life and respond with faithfulness.

A Practice to Try

1. Instead of praying and then doing something, the people waited for the Lord's response. Practice waiting for the Lord's response to your prayers. Perhaps journal what you feel the Spirit may be saying to you over the course of the week.

Readings to Read This Week

The readings were referred to in the sermon.

1. Psalm 60
2. Psalm 106
3. Psalm 107
4. Psalm 118
5. Psalm 136

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.