

GBC LIFE GROUP RESOURCES 2024

Series: Our Extra Ordinary Life Together

Introduction to GBC Life Group Resources

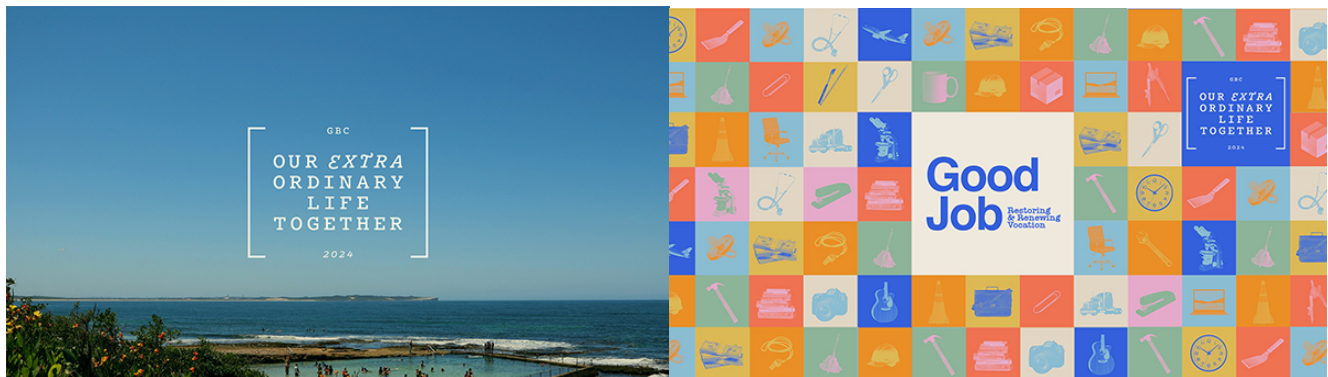
Life Groups are a critical ministry of our life together at Gymeabaptist Church. These resources are produced each Monday as a companion to the sermon series. Choosing to use these resources facilitates our sense of community as we share together around common themes and passages.

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!

The activities range from questions to ask, prayers to pray, practices to try, and biblical passages to read (usually in the time between Life Group meetings).

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.



Good Job – The Restoration and Renewal of Vocation: A Brief Introduction

This series is in partial fulfilment of one of our goals for 2024: To foster followers of Jesus who are prepared, equipped, and supported to participate in God's mission in their vocation. Vocation is the broader category used to describe the thing(s) we fill our days with. Often this is paid work, but can include study, home making, caring for family members, or volunteering. It is a significant part of our life together that is made extraordinary by our shared mission in Jesus.

We have several guests lined up to join us including Kara Martin (author of the book *Workship*), Andrew Sloane (lecturer at Morling College), and Scott Morrison (pastor of Georges River Life Church and director of The Different Co.). All of them have done significant thinking about how communities of faith can more effectively equip followers of Jesus to see their work as part of their faith commitment.

A Brief Overview of This Week's Sermon

Key Text(s): Ecclesiastes 2:17-23

Our guest was Andrew Sloane, a member of the Morling College faculty who lectures in Bible (OT) and Christian thought. His sermon was about the wide variety of ways that the Bible reflects the way our vocation is affected by sin. He used a series of biblical texts to describe the pain we can experience including Genesis 3:17b-19 (thorns, thistles, and the sweat of our brow), Ecclesiastes 2:17-23 (the Hebrew term usually translated as 'meaningless' is hebel which expresses 'breath' or 'vapour', describing human activity as insubstantial and fleeting), Exodus 5:6-13 (bricks without straw; the frustration of activity that is 'impossible'), Matthew 20:1-7 (a parable about the kingdom that, nonetheless, describes precarious work), and Ruth 2:8-9, 22 (the experience of dangerous work, including sexual harassment).

There is more to say about the impact of sin on our vocations (e.g., equating our value and worth with what we do, or the way greed drives our economy) but Andrew drew our attention to an important observation: these stories demonstrate that Scripture and the God who has given them to us 'gets us' in our vocational struggles. The examples that Andrew referenced show how clearly Scripture describes our common experience and provides even the most loathsome circumstances with the dignity of God's sight. Imagine if Scripture was filled only with examples of fulfilling, satisfying, compelling vocations? Anything less would be seen as beneath God's concern.

And if we needed any greater evidence of the dignity of all human vocation, we have it in Jesus who worked as a carpenter and probably not as a niche, bespoke carpenter, but one who was subject to the same injustices, risks, and difficulties of others. He is indeed a high priest who is able to empathise with our struggles (Hebrews 4:15).

Work, with all its struggles, is not a curse or judgment from God for sin but is a gift that has been affected by sin. And our vocation too will be restored and renewed (1 Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 21:24; 22:3).

However, as we live between the times what can we do? Andrew suggested a few things that we can do on Monday (as a symbol for our vocation). First, read our Bibles more widely and more carefully, looking for the way in which our lives are reflected in its pages and the way in which the texts shape our experiences. Second, utilise the many prayers of lament in the Bible. Scripture is clear-eyed about our human condition and is not afraid to bring it all to God. These prayers provide us with a faithful pattern to follow. Third, consider where we may have some power in our vocations to serve others and make their vocation more fruitful and faithful to God's purposes for them. As Andrew put it, perhaps you can be a Boaz to someone's Ruth; someone with power to make things safe and secure so they can flourish!

Questions to Ask

- Andrew referenced several passages which each contained a different aspect of how our vocations are impacted by sin. Was there one that stood out to you as being particularly true of your experience?
LEADER'S NOTE: One of the topics Andrew raised was the possibility of sexual harassment or sexual violence at work. If group members have experienced these at work, the group meeting may not be the appropriate time to discuss this. If people need immediate support they can call 1-800-RESPECT (737-7328). You can also call on the elders for support.
- What difference does it make to your vocational experiences to know that God (and Scripture) "gets you"?
- Along the same lines, what difference does it make to know that vocation remains a good gift from God even though it has been impacted so deeply by sin?
- Are you in a position to be a Boaz in your vocation? Do you have some power to make a difference that will serve others? How might you use that influence this week?

A Prayer to Pray

- If appropriate commit the brokenness we face in our vocations before the Lord; acknowledge the difficulty, frustration, lack of security, fearfulness, etc. that you experience and give thanks that God "gets you".

A Practice to Try

- If you attempted to write a description of your vocation (like the postal worker's one used by Kara last week) share them with the group

2. Keep a vocation journal on the impacts of sin in your work and, as you do, remember that God 'gets you' in those situations.

Readings to Read This Week

The following passages were referenced in the sermon. As you read them, use the four questions we have adapted to Read the Bible Together:

1. What stood out to you (especially about your vocational experience)?
2. What questions does this passage raise?
3. What is God inviting you to in this passage (especially in your vocational experience)?
4. Who can you tell what you have learned?

Genesis 3:17b-19

Exodus 5:6-14

Ruth 2:1-9

Matthew 20:1-7

Ecclesiastes 2:17-23

A Mission Commitment to Reflect on

Alongside your deepening relationships with one another in your Life Group, we want to encourage a deeper understanding and commitment to our vision, purpose, and values as a community of faith in the hope that we will experience a deeper sense of community and belonging. To assist that we will be suggesting one of our mission-commitments to reflect on (See "GBC Mission Commitments" document for an overview of our commitments.).

As we reflect on the impact of sin on our vocations it is more than appropriate to reflect on how we believe our story will be resolved: in the restoration and renewal of all things. Our participation in this mission of God is our purpose as a community of faith.

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. Last Wednesday we held our Annual Supper and Marc shared some of what is on his heart for our community of faith at the start of the year. This brief message will be on our podcast platform this week. Please let your group know so that they can catch up on this if they'd like.
2. This Sunday (March 3) is the last week in our Good Job series and we have Scott Morrison with us. Scott is the senior pastor at Georges River Life Church (Peakhurst) alongside his work with the Different Co., an organisation focused on whole-life discipleship and the integration of vocation and faith.

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.