

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 31:2-8, 20-21; 32:1-23

"After all that Hezekiah had so faithfully done, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah..." This is one of the most troubling verses in all of Scripture. A faithful man – one of the most faithful in all of Scripture – experiences trouble. Like his father, Ahaz's crisis, this one is also reflected on in three places (2 Kings 18-19; Isaiah 36-37; and here). The other passages, along with the annals of Sennacherib of Assyria, provide a clearer picture of what happened.

Hezekiah's dedication to the purification of the temple had significant political implications. To reject the Assyrian gods whom his father had accepted when he became a vassal of the Assyrian empire, was to reject vassalage. It was a declaration that Hezekiah sought freedom from under the yoke of Assyria. Apparently, he made extensive preparations: fortifying the cities of Judah, strengthening the defence of Jerusalem, securing the water supply in the Siloam tunnel, and forming a network of allies in the region. After he had been king for about a decade, he saw his chance. When Sennacherib came to the throne, the Babylonians – Assyria's near neighbour and nemesis – rebelled. With the king of

Assyria occupied with a serious local challenge, Hezekiah withheld tribute – declaring Judean independence – and formed a coalition with his allies.

It wasn't too long, however, before Sennacherib had crushed the Babylonians and turned his attention to the rebel southern states. We have Sennacherib's own annals which confirms what we read in 2 Kings 18. He destroyed 46 fortified cities in Jerusalem, laid siege to Lachish – the second most important city in Judah – and destroyed it (as commemorated in the Lachish reliefs), and sent a small force to besiege Jerusalem as well. He says he caged Hezekiah in the city like a bird.

The Chronicler emphasises Hezekiah's faithfulness and Assyrian blasphemy, culminating in the rescue of Jerusalem. The Lord saved Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem. What the Chronicler doesn't deal with in his devotional history, is the extent of the ruin that Hezekiah sustained in the midst of his faithfulness. The fortified cities destroyed, Lachish in ruins, war reparations paid, territory lost, and a return to vassalage.

And here's where the tension becomes very real. While Ahaz is condemned for his unfaithfulness, he achieved a better outcome than Hezekiah did through faithfulness! This raises a critical, foundational question: Is faithfulness to the Lord worth it?

The Chronicler's answer is "Always" and the example of Hezekiah is one of the clearest demonstrations of this commitment to faithfulness regardless of the outcome.

This same question sits behind the entire narrative of the Book of Job. When the Lord draws Satan's attention to Job's righteousness, Satan is dismissive – "Does Job fear God for nothing?" The implication is that the Lord is only worth loving if he pays out! This sits under the dialogue that follows where Job's unjust suffering is considered – with no answer. Except that Job remains faithful in his suffering.

Psalms 73 contains a similar narrative arc. The psalmist knows that he should love the Lord, but sees the success of the wicked – in comparison to his own personal suffering – and almost slips. In the end, however, he declares that "As for me, it is good to be near God." And that suffices.

As Chronicles gets closer to its conclusion, this question becomes more and more important. Is faithfulness, even in the face of suffering, worth it? If we can, like Hezekiah, Job, Asaph, and our Lord Jesus, commit to faithfulness regardless of the outcome, we will have heard the Chronicler's challenge to us!

Questions to Ask

1. Re-read the Assyrian commander's message to the Jewish citizens on the walls of Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 32:10-15). How does this raise the question of whether faithfulness is worth it?
2. The salvation of the Lord for Hezekiah was real, but was also partial and anticipatory. We experience the same as followers of Jesus. What makes this difficult and challenging for us?
3. It is always worth it to be faithful to the Lord. Discuss.
4. What other biblical characters come to mind when you think of faithfulness regardless of the outcome?

A Prayer to Pray

1. Pray for each other that you would always prioritise faithfulness.

A Practice to Try

1. Memorise Psalm 73:28 and meditate upon it this week.

Readings to Read This Week

These readings were mentioned in the sermon or reflect on the key lesson.

1. Job 1-2
2. Psalm 73
3. Hebrews 11
4. 2 Kings 18-19
5. Isaiah 36-37

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. The GBC Fair Trade Market is only a couple of weeks away. There is still need for volunteers to serve our wider community on that day so if you are able to help, please let us know. Regardless of whether you can help or not, it's an easy event to invite people to! Fair Trade is one of the ways we have chosen to respond to the invitation of God

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.