

# 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](mailto: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 36:15-23

The Chronicler's account ends with a brief, but devastating, report of the exile of the Lord's people and a tantalising description of a new hope. Between Manasseh's reign and the exile two key events took place. First, the Assyrian Empire collapsed and was replaced by the Babylonians. Second, Manasseh's grandson, Josiah became king. Josiah was one of the good ones – one of the best ones really – and did what the good ones did. He reformed the worship of the Lord and encouraged the people to greater faithfulness. This is significant in and of itself, but reading between the lines, we see evidence of Josiah's political success. As Assyrian power declined in the region, Josiah withheld tribute – thus declaring political independence – and annexed what had formerly been the kingdom of Israel. For the first time in nearly a century Judah was free from Assyrian control and for the first time in over three hundred years there was one king of David's line ruling over a united Israel! With only a few pages left in the Chronicler's account, it appears that we're in for a happy ending! With Josiah, all of the Lord's promises appear to be coming to pass.

And then he dies.

And once Josiah dies the end comes swiftly. Within twenty years the kingdom falls. Many are killed, the city is destroyed, the temple burned down, and the remnant taken into exile in Babylon.

For all the political, military, and economic implications, the exile was primarily a theological crisis. All the signs of their covenant with the Lord were taken away – land, king, city, and temple. The critical question of the crisis was whether the Lord was still their god.

There were two sources of hope for the people of God. The first was the statement of faith that it was the Lord who had brought the Babylonians up to Jerusalem (as opposed to the Lord having been defeated by the Babylonian gods or because the Lord had abandoned his people). If the Lord had been faithful to his promises to judge their unfaithfulness, how much more would he be faithful to his promises to restore?!

The second was found in the words of the prophets who spoke of a return from exile; a gracious restoration that had nothing to do with the people's response and everything to do with God's commitment to his plans and purposes!

And then, the unexpected ending of Chronicles – and, in fact, all of Hebrew Scripture – the decree of Cyrus, king of Persia. What is unexpected about this decree is that it has all the marks of a good king of David's line – acknowledgement of the Lord's sovereignty and a priority (it's in the first year) to build a temple for the Lord – and yet, this is not a king of David's line at all, but a Gentile! The plans and purposes of God have taken an unexpected twist indeed.

This ending invites three considerations for the people of God. First, to recognise the continuity of God's purposes. There is a continuity in the story, even in the face of unexpected twists. There is a line that can be drawn from God's original creation intent, through his promises to Abraham, Moses, and David, through Cyrus and Jesus (another unexpected twist!), and down to our day.

This continuity invites us to reflect on our faithfulness and to recognise that faithfulness takes place against the gracious commitment of God to his plans and purposes; he will do what he has committed to do. Our task, as the faithful, is to join in with what he is doing!

And finally, we are invited to keep our eyes open for the unexpected actions of God. He is always at work and, while there is a continuity to his work, there are also new things!

We are waiting for God's plans and purposes to come to pass and, while we wait, we are invited to participate with him wherever he is at work!

## Questions to Ask

1. What has stood out to you most in this series in Chronicles?
2. The Lord's commitment to his plans and purposes is an act of grace because it is not reliant upon our faithfulness (or lack thereof). How does this grace impact our participation in his plans and purposes?
3. Have you experienced the unexpected work of God in your life? Briefly share your experience.
4. Faithfulness is, in part, an aligning of our values, priorities, and resources to participate with God's plans – on the basis that we love him and want him to succeed. Discuss.

## A Prayer to Pray

1. Focus on God's grace evident in your life; giving thanks for all he has given to us and commit yourselves to participate, where you are able, in his plans and purposes.

## A Practice to Try

1. Give some thought to your daily routine and identify places where you can pause for 10-15 seconds and turn your heart and mind to how God might be inviting you to participate in his plans and purposes (e.g., between clients, after you drop the kids off and before you pick them up, at morning tea or lunch).

## Readings to Read This Week

These readings fill in the blanks that we skipped between Manasseh and the exile.

1. 2 Chronicles 33:21-34:13
2. 2 Chronicles 34:14-33
3. 2 Chronicles 35:1-36:1
4. 2 Chronicles 36:2-14
5. Jeremiah 25:1-14

## 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 contributing 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 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.