

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@gyneabaptist.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 second block and will run through to May.

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 9:1-8

The visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon is the highwater mark of Chronicles. It represents everything that Israel was meant to be and the partial fulfilment of God's purposes for his people.

This is evident when we remember the purpose of the temple. It was meant to be a concrete representation of a community whose organising principle was the right worship of the Lord; the alignment of their values, priorities, and behaviours with those of the Lord their God. The Chronicler's focus on the prioritisation of the temple in the reigns of David and Solomon is related to this overarching purpose.

David's intense and joyful preparation for the temple is matched by Solomon's construction. It is noteworthy that the Chronicler opens his description of Solomon's reign with the young king's request for wisdom; a request granted by the Lord. Two things make this noteworthy. First, that Solomon is presented as someone who fears the Lord – holding the ways of the Lord in the highest regard – the ideal king of Israel. Second, the demonstration

of his divinely-granted wisdom is the construction of the temple – representing a community organised around right worship!

After the Chronicler narrates Solomon's construction and dedication of the temple he skips to the end of Solomon's life, listing some of his many accomplishments. The list is "interrupted" by the account of the Queen of Sheba.

A foreign potentate, she has heard of Solomon's fame and has come to see it for herself. She travels the 1400 km from Sheba (modern Yemen) to Jerusalem with a very great caravan filled with good things and, when she arrives, tests Solomon with hard questions. I can only imagine the questions she had for him, but the critical thing as far as the Chronicler is concerned is that none of her questions were beyond the wisdom God had given Solomon.

Having seen Solomon's wisdom and the breathtaking splendour of his kingdom and of his worship – the splendour of a kingdom aligned to the purposes of God – the Queen is left overwhelmed. Her confession of faith begins with two beatitudes (Happy/Blessed are...) which is reminiscent of Psalms 1-2 which open and close the same way: blessed is one who makes the Law of God the centre of their lives and blessed are those who submit to the Lord's anointed. Solomon's reign is representative of this happy/blessed state-of-affairs. And when God's people are aligned in this way the blessing of the Lord flows to the nations – exactly what he promised to Abraham (Genesis 12:3)!

This partial fulfilment of the Lord's promises to bless all nations through Abraham's descendants is why this text represents the highwater mark for Israel. It is a depiction of how things ought to be and how they ought to have remained. Alas, that is not the Chronicler's story!

But the Chronicler is not attempting to whitewash history. There are subtle reminders that Solomon, like his father David, was a flawed man and that this period of Israel's history was not without its own examples of unfaithfulness (e.g., the repeated references to the number of horses and chariots Solomon accumulated). This reminds us that even this highwater mark was due to God's grace.

The pattern found in the visit of the Queen of Sheba is one that can, and should, be followed by God's people wherever and whenever they are. As we seek to align our lives more and more fully around the right worship of God, demonstrating the happy/blessed state of doing so, those around us will become curious and gather to see if the reports are true and to receive the blessing of God flowing through his people!

Questions to Ask

1. What did you know about the Queen of Sheba before this sermon? What did she represent?
2. What stood out to you most in the sermon?
3. In your experience, what has made non-Christians curious about faith?
4. How might you, your group, and our community of faith, take our next faithful step to organising our lives around the values, priorities, and behaviours of God? (Don't let this become a "What the church can do better" conversation, but one where we identify our part in God's mission.)

A Prayer to Pray

1. Commit the things you identified in Question 4 above to the Lord.

A Practice to Try

1. Pick one of the things you identified in Question 4 above and commit to doing it.

Readings to Read This Week

The readings this week reflect on God's purposes for the nations.

1. Genesis 12:1-3
2. Psalms 1-2
3. Isaiah 60:1-14
4. Psalm 96 (1 Chronicles 16:23-33)
5. Revelation 21:22-22:5

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.).

Our purpose is God's purpose; to restore and new all things in Christ Jesus. We try to keep this front and centre for our 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. It's May Mission Month! Encourage your group to pray for the various projects (there is a Thursday night Zoom prayer, hosted by the elders, from 7:30-8:00 that will focus on these projects). One of our success criteria for May is that we have more people contributing year on year. Encourage your group to prayerfully consider how they might participate this year.

Link to Thursday Prayer Night Zoom:

You can join in using this link <https://bit.ly/gbctuesdaynightprayer> or using the Meeting ID: 983 2435 8394 and Passcode: 071929.

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 his, 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.