

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 29:1-11; 30:1-31:1

After Ahaz's failure to trust the Lord, choosing instead to trust in Assyria (and her gods), we come to his son, Hezekiah who is one of the greats. His faithfulness to the Lord is demonstrated by his immediate decision to open the temple of the Lord that his father had closed and to renew the covenant with the Lord. Throughout Chronicles good kings are dedicated to the temple; the physical symbol of God's kingdom on earth. Ahaz's political alliance with Assyria had been responsible for the temple closure and Hezekiah's decision to reopen it reflects his determination to trust the Lord (and be free from Assyrian sovereignty).

The text of 2 Chronicles 29 suggests that this was the very first act of Hezekiah's reign (29:3, 17) and provides the immediate background to the celebration of the Passover. On paper, it was a bit of a disaster!

Because the cleansing of the temple took sixteen days, they had not been able to celebrate at the right time (the fourteenth day of the first month) and so the king and his officials decided to

celebrate it in the second month (on the basis of the contingency in the Law). The Chronicler also notes that in the first month no one had assembled to celebrate it (30:3). It had ceased to be a thing that anyone bothered to observe!

They also decide to invite the remnant of the kingdom of Israel that had been destroyed by the Assyrians a few years earlier. This olive branch was largely rejected, but was accepted by a few who made their way to Jerusalem.

When the people assembled, the priests and Levites – who had only just consecrated themselves – took up their positions in the temple to assist the people – many of whom were not ceremonially clean. In fact, most of those who had come from the northern kingdom ate the Passover even though they were unclean, “contrary to what was written” (30:18) prompting a prayer of intercession from the king!

What is so striking about the Chronicler’s account is that, despite this less-than-ideal celebration, the blessing of the Lord is overwhelmingly evident! The Lord gives the people unity of mind (30:12), fills them with joy (even though this is not explicitly stated), and must surely be behind the apparent change of heart shown in the people’s rejection of idolatry (30:14; 31:1). Usually, it is the king who is described as ridding the land of idols. Here, uniquely, it is the people. This is nothing short of revival!

The “secret” to this blessed mess is found in Hezekiah’s prayer for those who ate the Passover meal even though they were unclean. “May the Lord, who is good, pardon everyone who sets their hearts on seeking God – the Lord, the God of their ancestors.” (30:18b-19a)

This illustrates two important principles for faithful living ‘while we wait’. First, that getting it right matters. Hezekiah’s prayer was called for because, it seems, the people were falling ill due to being unclean. Near enough is not good enough when it comes to faithfulness.

Second, getting it right is not nearly as important as the posture of our hearts. Elsewhere in Scripture, the Lord condemns his people for getting the details right but without any heart connection (Amos 5:21-24). And the priority of a heart turned to the Lord means that faithfulness ‘while we wait’ doesn’t wait to seek the Lord. It is striking that the Chronicler uses this first Passover of Hezekiah’s reign rather than the one in the second year which, I am sure, was celebrated at the right time and with greater preparation. Hezekiah’s faithfulness, flowing from a heart set on seeking the Lord, didn’t wait until all the i’s were dotted and t’s crossed, but began immediately; trusting in the goodness of God.

Questions to Ask

1. What stood out to you in this story?
2. There is a tension between the call to perfect, Christ-like obedience (which can paralyse us) and God’s gracious response to those whose hearts are set, however imperfectly, on seeking him (which can lead to a “she’ll be right” mentality). How do you navigate this tension?
3. Hezekiah didn’t wait to begin living faithfully but began before he (and the people) were fully ready. How can you begin to live more faithfully right now?
4. How would you describe a heart set on seeking the Lord? What are the characteristics and/or evidence for it?

A Prayer to Pray

Pray Hezekiah's prayer for each other, "May the Lord, who is good, pardon who sets their heart on seeking God" (30:18).

A Practice to Try

1. Using your answers from question 4 above, consider how you can set your own heart more fully on seeking the Lord.

Readings to Read This Week

These readings all reflect on the priority of the heart in our faithfulness.

1. 1 Samuel 15:1-22
2. Micah 6:1-8
3. Isaiah 29:13
4. Matthew 15:1-20
5. Ephesians 4:20-24

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.
2. Fair Trade Market is Saturday 26 October. Who will you attend with? Are you able to serve and host and welcome guests to GBC?

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.