

GBC LIFE GROUP RESOURCES 2025

Series: Lives Changed by Jesus

Introduction to GBC Life Group Resources

Life Groups are a critical ministry of our life together at Gynea Baptist Church where we want everyone to find their place in God's family and in God's mission. 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!

We also include additional things that we are encouraging our Life Group leaders, as leaders of GBC, to be sharing with your groups. 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 contact Nicole Jones at LifeGroups@gymeabaptist.org.au.



Lives Changed by Jesus: A Brief Introduction

This is our theme for 2025 and we will be returning to it several times over the course of the year. The theme is grounded in our strategic priorities of Community Engagement and Spiritual Journey and seeks to focus on the ongoing conversion we experience as followers of Jesus.

In this first sermon series, we will be focusing on characteristics that demonstrate a life changed by Jesus.

A Brief Overview of This Week's Sermon

Key Text(s): 1 Peter 3:8-18

This week's topic is "being prepared to give an answer"; often referred to as apologetics (from the Greek word *apologia*; a defence/answer). This can sometimes be narrowly thought of as being able to answer the BIG questions about faith: the problem of evil, the evidence for the resurrection, the reliability of Scripture, etc. However, this passage in 1 Peter provides a broader foundation for what we are giving an answer for.

Written to a group of Gentile believers who are experiencing hardship for their faith, Peter encourages them to persevere in the very things that have led to their persecution! Reflecting Jesus' teaching and example, Peter calls this community of faith to unity, love, compassion, and humility towards each other and a non-retaliatory posture towards those who are causing them trouble. In fact, they are to bless those who wish them evil (see Matthew 5:38-48; 20:20-28).

This kind of behaviour – as an extension of Jesus' way of life – was based in what they believed about Jesus (which was the deep reason they were experiencing persecution). They were, like Jesus, to suffer for doing and to do so in the firm knowledge that they would be vindicated by God whose face is against those who are evil. Living in the belief that Christ (not Caesar) is Lord would sustain them in their suffering.

This kind of life – following Jesus and embracing suffering – raises questions and Peter urges his readers to be prepared to give an answer or a defence. These questions are much more personal than some of the BIG questions of faith. They are questions about the values, priorities, and behaviours of followers of Jesus and we need to be prepared to explain them.

When we look to Peter's own experience of this (see Acts 2:12-41; 3:6-26) we see a powerful orator, empowered by the Spirit, citing the Old Testament, and calling people to repentance. We can feel that this is beyond us! However, this isn't where Peter began! In Matthew 16:13-20 Peter answers a question from Jesus himself about who he is – and his answer is simple: You are the Messiah. He still didn't fully understand this truth (as is evidenced in the remainder of the gospel), but it was enough to start.

Our defence of our lives following Jesus can be as simple as stating what we have experienced of Jesus; the difference he has made. We don't necessarily need to provide a philosophical defence of religious experience, but do need to explain why we practice generosity, read the Bible, pray, attend church services, forgive, serve, and so much more. And maybe it's as simple as "I follow the teaching of Jesus."

We are called to "show and tell" the gospel. In our actions to demonstrate what we believe about Jesus and to tell what we know about him to those who ask. This is the demonstration of a life changed – to the degree that questions are asked – and a life that is continuing to be changed – to the degree that we can clearly and simply, with gentleness and respect, give an answer.

Questions to Ask

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. What are some of the questions that people have asked you about your life as a follower of Jesus?
3. Rox suggested coming up with a twenty-second testimony. "Before I was... but now, having met Jesus, I am..." What would your twenty-second testimony be?
4. What are some of the BIG questions that you have been asked? How did you answer them?
5. How have you grown in confidence in your faith?
6. What advice would you give to someone about gaining confidence in their faith?

A Prayer to Pray

Continue to pray for each other that the Holy Spirit would identify an area of our lives that He wants to align more closely over the course of 2025.

Rox also reminded us that while we don't often experience persecution for our faith, there are many in the global church who do. Take some time to pray for those who are persecuted – that they might persevere in hardship and be prepared to give an answer for the hope they have.

A Practice to Try

Keep working on a twenty-second testimony.

Readings to Read This Week

The following passages include those that Peter uses as well as others from the New Testament that reflect our attitude towards suffering.

Psalm 34

Isaiah 8:11-17

Hebrews 12:1-13

Revelation 3:7-13

Luke 12:1-12

A Mission Commitment to Reflect on

Our theme – Lives Changed by Jesus – is also our vision as a community of faith and has two areas of focus. First, that we might see lives changed for the first time by placing their faith in Jesus. Second, that we might see change in our lives as we continue to follow Jesus. We hope to keep both of these in view over the course of the year.

There may be opportunity to identify those in our lives who are becoming more open to faith or who are exploring faith in Jesus who we might more prayerfully support and encourage this year.

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. This week is Easter. Encourage your Life Group to find time and space to reflect on the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus.
2. We are getting close to Term 2 and the Encounter series. Be encouraging your group to think about who they might invite to one of these services

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 the 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.