

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 Gymea 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 16:1-14

The Chronicler's overview of King Asa's forty-one year reign is told in two scenes. The first, from early in his reign is a model of the kind of behaviour the Chronicler wants his readers to adopt. Asa sets his heart on seeking the Lord in the regular rhythms of life which prepares him to trust the Lord in a time of military crisis. The Lord's protection and blessing – the consequence of seeking the Lord – leads Asa and the people to redouble their commitment to seeking the Lord. The result, unsurprising, is that the land experiences peace "until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign." (2 Chronicles 15:19)

The second scene, in the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign, is another military crisis. Baasha, king of the northern kingdom of Israel, began to fortify the city of Ramah. Ramah was a strategically important city, perched in the hill country only a few kilometres from Jerusalem, it controlled the major thoroughfare that ran north/south. We're told that Baasha's intention was to prevent anyone entering

or leaving Judah by that way. This represented a military threat, but would also have had economic impact.

Unlike the earlier example, when Asa and the people had called out to the Lord, Asa takes matters into his own hands. Baasha's position had been strengthened by his treaty with his northern neighbour, Aram (modern day Syria). Peace on his northern border allowed him to focus on the southern border with Judah. Asa bribed the king of Aram to break his treaty with Baasha so that the king of Israel would withdraw. The king of Aram was only too happy to do so and subsequently attacked unsuspecting Israel, conquering territory and store cities. Baasha withdrew from his southern border to face the sudden crisis in the north. Asa then led a swift incursion over the border, taking all the building supplies and using them to fortify two cities on the Judean side of the border.

Crisis averted.

Like in the first scene, the returning king is met by a prophet of the Lord, but this time it is not with a word of encouragement, but with a rebuke. "Because you relied on the king of Aram and not on the Lord your God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped from your hand. Were not the Cushites and Libyans a mighty army with great numbers of chariots and horsemen? Yet when you relied on the Lord, he delivered them into your hand." (2 Chronicles 16:7-8).

Asa's political acumen and astute diplomacy – at one level, tremendously successful – were not the actions of someone who trusted the Lord, but an act of unfaithfulness. And Asa's response to the prophetic word demonstrates that this was not a one-time stumble, but the outworking of a deeper heart problem. The king did not listen and did not humble himself before the Lord. Instead, he was enraged that the prophet would confront him and imprisoned him.

This failure to trust the Lord is played out in one last tragic scene. In the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa was afflicted with a disease in his feet. Yet even though the illness was severe the Chronicler notes that "he did not seek help from the Lord, but only from the physicians."

What happened in the years between these two scenes that so changed Asa? And what can we learn "as we wait"?

It isn't a stretch to think that the intervening years of peace and prosperity had bred a complacency in Asa and the people and that they had – without noticing – slowly drifted away from trust in the Lord and drifted into a trust in their own competence. Is it that hard to believe that after thirty-five years of success that Asa would have begun to think that he had played a significant part in that success?

The Chronicler's interest is in challenging a similar drift in his hearers. After waiting for so long for the promises of God to be fulfilled, it would have been easy to begin to look for alternate solutions to bring about the desired outcomes. Asa's story is a warning to the people to finish well; to continue to seek the Lord in good times and bad

Questions to Ask

1. What stood out to you about the second part of Asa's reign?
2. How does comfort breed complacency (in all areas of our lives, but especially spiritual)?
3. Waiting, either in comfort or discomfort, is difficult. Discuss how these two scenarios make it difficult to wait.
4. What can we do to avoid Asa's fate? What are the practices we can engage in to avoid beginning to trust in our own wisdom?

A Prayer to Pray

1. Pray for one another, that each of us might remain tethered to the Lord in good times and in bad.

A Practice to Try

1. Centring prayer is a simple prayer – a short phrase, verse, or even a word – that is prayed to rest in God alone. It is an ancient form of prayer in which we seek to rest in God and allow the distractions of the immediate to flow around us.
Select a short prayer or word (e.g., “I trust in you,” “Remain with me,” “Strengthen me,” “Jesus.”) and set aside some time (15 minutes or so) to picture yourself in God’s presence and practice allowing your heart to become quiet. Use your phrase to help you focus on God and to return to you his presence when your thoughts distract you.

Readings to Read This Week

The readings this week reflect on the dangers of drifting away from trust in the Lord. As you read, consider the sources that lead to the drift.

1. Deuteronomy 8:6-18
2. Proverbs 30:7-9
3. Hebrews 10:32-39
4. Galatians 3:1-14
5. Revelation 3:14-22

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. During September we focus on the work of [Hopefield](#) and seek to raise the finances necessary to fund a DV counsellor two days a week (\$32,000). Please encourage your group to consider how they might support the work of Hopefield financially and/or in prayer! Every little bit counts towards making a huge impact in the lives of those who have been impacted by DV.

[Donate to HopeTember](#)

[Request Hopefield Prayer List](#)

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.