

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 Gymea 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): Ephesians 1:3-14

"The first characteristic of a life changed by Jesus is an increasing commitment to God's mission. This commitment is based on the "why" of our salvation. Ephesians 1:3-14 outlines an extraordinary series of blessings we have received in Christ – every spiritual blessing, elected to be holy and blameless, adopted into God's family, redeemed, forgiven, given insight into God's plans and purposes, and receiving the Holy Spirit. It's an amazing list! The question is, "Why did God do this?"

Part of the reason stems from his character. God is love, so it's not that surprising that he would predestine us "in love". God is generous, so it's not that surprising that he would lavish the riches of his grace on us. And so on.

Part of the reason is "for the praise of his glory" – God drawing attention to himself and his character so that people are filled with praise. And this points to a third reason: to fulfill his plans and purposes. The language of plans and purposes are found throughout – his choice of us, the revelation of his plans in Christ, his purpose to unite all things in him, etc.

The significance of this is that we have been saved for those purposes. Paul goes on to pray for the Ephesians and ends with a reflection on the role of the church in God's plans – the church is the body of Christ! We are to continue the work of Jesus on the earth. We have not been saved just to be saved, but to be part of God's plans in the church.

This then, ought to shape our ongoing journey as followers of Jesus. Regardless of whether you are just beginning to explore following Jesus or have been following him for years we are invited to continually align our lives to the plans and purposes of God in the world – we can, as God has shown us, demonstrate the same love, the same generosity, the same forgiveness, the same mercy to those around us as a demonstration of our commitment to God's plans.

When we love someone, we want them to succeed in whatever they do and are willing to help in whatever way we can. To some degree, we should be seeking to help God succeed in everything he is seeking to accomplish! This is what we have been saved for!

The mission of God lays beneath all of the topics we are going to cover in the weeks that follow – a deepening love for the body of Christ, an increasing delight in the Word, a commitment to prayer, etc.

Questions to Ask

1. Have a close look at Ephesians 1:3-14, 15-23 and list the blessings we have received in Christ and consider a) the change they imply, and; b) the ongoing difference each of them makes to our lives as followers of Jesus.
2. There is an individual experience of salvation and a corporate one with a frequent emphasis on the former over the latter. Discuss.

A Prayer to Pray

An increasing commitment to God's mission is essentially an increasing alignment of our values, priorities, and activities to God's plans in the world. 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.

A Practice to Try

Choose one of the characteristics of God that is demonstrated in Ephesians 1:3-14 and seek to demonstrate it in your life this week (e.g., generosity, forgiveness, grace, love).

Readings to Read This Week

The following passages reflect on God's plans and purposes. As you read them, use the four questions we have adapted to Read the Bible Together:

1. What stood out to you?
2. What questions does this passage raise?
3. What is God inviting you to in this passage?
4. Who can you tell what you have learned?

Ephesians 3:2-12

Colossians 1:15-23

1 Peter 1:3-12

Micah 4:1-5

Isaiah 55:1-13

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. We are gearing up for our Annual Dinner on Wednesday February 19 at 6:30pm This is an opportunity to meet others who are part of GBC and to hear a bit more from Marc about where he believes the Lord is leading us. You can register through LinkTree, GBC News or [CLICK HERE](#).
2. And please encourage your group to check their details on GBC Links; to update any contact details that have changed and to fill in the domains on passions, skills, and interests. This will enable us to invite them to be involved in areas that are more in line with who they are, and, if their details are correct, to invite them!

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.