

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 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): 1 Chronicles 21:1-13, 14-17

If you're familiar with the story of David as told in 2 Samuel you are probably aware of David's many failures. All of these failures were known to the Chronicler. So why choose a census? And, perhaps more importantly, why was the census such a sin? For us, we see counting things – people, sales, etc. – as responsible. Even in the Old Testament, the Lord himself commands the people to count themselves (see Numbers 1; 26)! What also appears clear is that the characters in the story told by the Chronicler knew this was wrong. Even Joab, the commander of the army (and a bit of a drop kick in the account given in Samuel), who you might assume would be interested in a census of the fighting men, tries to talk David out of it.

It is, in fact, in Joab's objection that we have a theological clue as to why this action was so egregious. "May the Lord multiply his troops a hundred times over." The armies of Israel were not David's to count. They were the Lord's. Furthermore, it was never about the numbers. Numerical strength wasn't the key to victory for the armies of Israel; the Lord's presence with them was.

And David knew this. His defeat of the Philistine champion Goliath was the Lord's victory – "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied." (1 Sam. 17:45) His many victories leading the armies of Israel are specifically linked to the Lord's presence with him (1 Sam. 18:1-16). David knew that the number of fighting men was no guarantee of victory.

The census tells us something far more important about David's heart than the state of his army. For what we count reveals what we are counting on. We can do the same (e.g., social media followers, bank balances, etc.).

We can only guess why David insisted on the census being taken. Perhaps it was pride; an over-confidence that has gradually developed over the course of his reign (for this event comes near the end of David's reign in Samuel's account). However, it was not until all the numbers were tallied that David is finally overcome by his guilt and repents of his 'very foolish' action.

In response to his folly God gives David three choices of discipline: three years of famine, three months of military defeats, three days of plague. David wisely throws himself at the mercy of the Lord. A plague breaks out and thousands of Israelites die, but as the angel of the Lord comes to Jerusalem to destroy the city, the Lord relents and halts the plague.

The angel of the Lord was, at that point, standing at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. Gad, the prophet of the Lord, commands David to build an altar to the Lord at the place where mercy was granted and David does so, purchasing the threshing floor, building an altar, and declaring that the temple will be built on that very site (1 Chronicles 22:1).

This is, of course, more than an origin story, explaining why the temple was built where it was. It is a story that tells us something important about God and about how his people should respond to him.

The Chronicler is reminding his readers (who may have been very aware of their small number) that the Lord's mercy is still available for them and that they should not give up and begin to trust in their own (small) strength, but remember that the battle was the Lord's.

Questions to Ask

1. What are the sorts of things that we count in our lives? How might these things become the source of our security or identity as opposed to God?
2. David's pride seems to have contributed to his foolish decision. How does pride influence our decisions?
3. Share a time when you have experienced the principle that the battle is the Lord's? What tempts us to attempt to solve our problems on our own?
4. David chooses to fall into the hands of the Lord; the place of discipline and mercy. What do we learn from David's choice?
5. The temple as the place of mercy is a powerful symbol. As Christians we believe that Jesus has replaced the temple as the place of God's mercy. How does this foundation shape the way and the reasons we come to the Lord?

A Prayer to Pray

1. Commit your struggles to the Lord and ask for his mercy to be made evident in your lives. Repent of the ways you have perhaps sought to solve them on your own or in your own strength.

A Practice to Try

1. Is there a geographical location that you associate with the Lord's action on your behalf? If you are able to, visit that location and spend some time in prayer. If you are not able to, journal about the place, describing it.

Readings to Read This Week

The readings this week reflect the texts Marc referred to in his sermon.

1. Psalm 18
2. 1 Samuel 17
3. Proverbs 3:5-6
4. 2 Samuel 24 (the other account of the census)
5. 1 Chronicles 21:18-30

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.)

Roxane mentioned our value of being On-Purpose; intentionally leaving margin and space in our lives to participate in the mission of God. If an opportunity arises, this might be something to reinforce.

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. Many of our ministries are on break due to the school holidays. Pray for our kids and youth teams as they have a break.

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.