

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.



Our Extra Ordinary Life Together: A Brief Introduction

This is our theme for 2024 and we will be returning to it several times over the course of the year. The theme is grounded in our strategic priority of Belonging and seeks to focus our hearts and minds on how our ordinary lives are made extraordinary by our shared purpose; to 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.

Part of our exploration of this theme will include reflection on our place in the church universal; those with whom we share this extraordinary purpose. To do so we will, from time to time, be drawing attention to the church calendar (e.g., Lent and Advent) and other common Christian practices (e.g., the Lord's prayer, the Apostles' Creed). These will be reflected in some of the potential activities you might want to try as a Life Group.

A Brief Overview of This Week's Sermon

Key Text(s): Luke 5:1-11

This Sunday marks the beginning of Ordinary Time in the Church calendar. It is the longest 'season' and is focused on the ministry of Jesus and our growth as his disciples. It seemed appropriate, given this focus, to turn to the call of Jesus to follow him in Luke 5:1-11.

In this simple story Simon (Peter), James, and John begin to follow Jesus after a miraculous catch of fish on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus has been preaching the good news of the kingdom in the surrounding villages and town (4:43) and has returned to Capernaum where he is teaching a crowd of people by the water's edge. Presumably to be heard more effectively Jesus approaches Simon – who he already knew (4:38-39) – and asks to use his fishing boat as a floating platform. Simon, who with his partners was cleaning the nets after a night of fishing, agrees and puts out a little from the shore.

After he finishes, Jesus tells Simon to put out further and let the nets down. Simon decides to humour this carpenter turned rabbi – they had been fishing all night and caught nothing and the fish would be able to see the linen nets in the daylight. To Simon's surprise, when they let the nets down, they fill with fish to the point where the nets begin to break. They fill both boats with so many fish that the boats begin to sink!

This is enough for Simon who falls before Jesus, exclaiming, "Go away from me Lord; I am a sinful man!" This response is reminiscent of Isaiah's when he saw the Lord – "Woe to me!" I cried, "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips." (Isaiah 6:5). Jesus' response to Simon, "Do not be afraid" also suggests a context of revelation – assurance that they won't die is a common element of revelation accounts (See Luke 1:11-13, 29-30; 2:8-10).

Just like in Isaiah 6, the revelation leads to commission; Isaiah to the prophetic ministry, Simon to a life of following Jesus.

The invitation to follow Jesus given to Simon in Luke 5:11 is an invitation extended to all of us. And yet, because Peter leaves everything behind, literally follows Jesus, and becomes the leader of the early Jesus movement it's easy to exempt ourselves or, perhaps more specifically, to assume that this kind of all-in call is for the few called to church work or some ministry.

There are, however, important details that remind us that our call to follow Jesus applies to where we are. In particular, it is a call that takes place in the context of our vocation. Vocation is anything we do with intent and purpose and encompasses work (paid and unpaid), domestic duties, volunteer engagement, etc.

Notice that Simon and his partners are not part of the crowd who have come to listen to Jesus – they are working! After a night of labour (without much reward) they are cleaning and repairing the nets in readiness for the next night's labour. Jesus' work comes to them in that context and begins with Jesus asking to use work equipment for his purposes. It is also noteworthy that Jesus is revealed to Simon, not in some grand healing miracle or even an amazing nature miracle, but in a catch of fish. A large catch to be sure, but a catch of fish nonetheless. Jesus is revealed in Simon's vocation. And finally, Jesus calls him to follow him in the idiom of his vocation, "You will fish for people." Simon is to follow Jesus as a fisherman!

While Simon does leave everything behind, his vocational encounter with Jesus and call to follow has implications for us. Following Jesus doesn't happen "out there" somewhere, but right where we are – in our vocations and daily lives!

As we enter Ordinary Time and focus on Jesus' ministry and our discipleship, let us not lose sight of how the call to follow makes Ordinary Time extraordinary!

Questions to Ask

1. Can you complete the call of Jesus in the idiom of your vocation? “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will...”? How might you frame your vocation in terms of Jesus’ work to renew and restore all things? (And remember, it is the actual “work” that is good, not the evangelistic opportunities we may or may not get as a consequence of following Jesus!)
2. How is Jesus’ plan to renew and restore all things revealed in your vocation? Where do you bring order from disorder? Healing where there was sickness? Stability where there was uncertainty? Guidance where there was confusion?
3. Simon (and Isaiah) were confronted by their sinful condition in the presence of God, but in neither case did this exempt them from service. Discuss.
4. As we enter into Ordinary Time, is there an area of focus for you in your discipleship? A virtue you would like the Spirit to develop in you? A skill you would like to learn? A passage you would like to memorise?

A Prayer to Pray

Pray for each other, that we might grow as followers of Jesus in the areas identified in Q.4 above.

A Practice to Try

Have a look at the church calendar and do a little research into Ordinary Time. There are many good resources online (keep in mind many will be Catholic -you may want to search for Anglican resources).

Readings to Read This Week

The readings are taken from Luke’s “Sermon on the Plain” and provide an opportunity to reflect on the teachings of Jesus and where we might grow as his followers.

1. Luke 6:20-26
2. Luke 6:27-36
3. Luke 6:37-42
4. Luke 6:43-45
5. Luke 6:46-49

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.)

One of our values is to be Life-Long Learners. As followers of Jesus there is always more to learn, always more areas to become more Christ-like. A discipleship focus for Ordinary Time is one way we can reflect this value.

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.

May Mission Month is nearly over – we’ve heard about all our projects, now it’s up to us to contribute faithfully! One of our success criteria for May is that we have more people contributing year on year. Encourage your group to prayerfully consider how they might participate this year.

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.