

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 15:1-9

NOTE: Brett Hookham, senior pastor of Menai Baptist, was our guest preacher this week.

We have jumped ahead in the story of Israel since we were last in Chronicles. After Solomon's reign – the high-water mark in Israel's history – the kingdom was rent apart by civil war. The northern kingdom of Israel seceded under Jeroboam son of Nebat while the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained loyal to David's grandson, Rehoboam. The book of Kings makes clear that this was a result of Solomon's idolatry (1 Kings 11:1-26) while the Chronicler only acknowledges that it was "from the Lord" (see 2 Chronicles 10:15; 11:1-4). The Chronicler's focus is squarely on events in the southern kingdom of Judah with little or no mention of the kings of Israel in the north.

Rehoboam's grandson, Asa, is described as doing what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord, removing idolatrous religious sites throughout his kingdom and commanding the people to seek the

Lord (14:2-6). One of the central premises the Chronicler wants to demonstrate is that when God's people seek the Lord, he is found by them. This, then, is a key practice for God's waiting people.

The first part of Asa's reign is characterised by this active seeking. In the first several years (14:6) there is very little to report apart from the blessing that the kingdom of Judah experienced as a result of having sought the Lord. However, as Brett drew attention to, the practice of seeking the Lord in the ordinary, unexceptional days can prepare us for the extraordinary.

And it's not too long before Asa and Judah face an exceptional challenge. Zerah the Cushite marched against Judah with an enormous army. Instead of panicking, Asa does what he and the people have been doing up to this point: they cry out to the Lord. Their seeking in the unexceptional days of peace has become reflexive.

The Lord responds with a famous victory – and it's described as the Lord's victory, not a result of Asa's bravery or military strategy – and the army returned with a great deal of plunder. As they are nearing Jerusalem they were met by a prophet, Azariah son of Oded, who makes clear the lesson – you have sought the Lord and were found by him – and encourages Asa to take courage and continue to seek the Lord.

And he does! The remaining idols were removed, the temple was prepared, and the people gathered to renew the covenant with the Lord. This appears to have been a regular occurrence for the people of God (some scholars believe it was part of an annual festival), but even if this was a one-off, their commitment to the Lord would have included the regular rhythms of the various festivals (including Sabbath!). These rhythms reinforced their commitment to seek the Lord and gave some structure to their commitment.

It is noteworthy – mostly because it is so rare in Israel's history – that the people, rather than Asa, are the focus. The regular practices the king has led the people in have become their own and they rejoiced to seek the Lord and did so eagerly (15:12-15).

The first part of Asa's reign concludes with a reference to Asa's faithfulness to the Lord and the subsequent peace that he and the people experienced until the thirty-fifth year of his reign (a somewhat ominous note...)

Questions to Ask

1. What stood out to you about the first part of Asa's reign?
2. What does it mean to you, in practical terms, to "seek the Lord"?
3. What makes it difficult to seek the Lord when times are unexceptional? How might Asa and Judah have been tempted to explain their success and peace apart from their seeking of the Lord?
4. Describe an experience, in any area of life, where a regular, routine practice has become reflexive in an emergency. What can we apply from that to our own seeking of the Lord?
5. What rhythms or practices do you have to help you seek the Lord?

A Prayer to Pray

1. Pray for each other and our commitment to seek the Lord, whether we find ourselves in an unexceptional situation or an emergency.

A Practice to Try

1. Consider beginning to experiment with one of the practices that your group identified in Question 2 either as an addition to your own practices or as a way to start.

Readings to Read This Week

The readings this week reflect on passages that describe a “seeker’s” life.

1. Malachi 2:7-9
2. Psalms 119:1-8
3. Ezra 6:19-22
4. Isaiah 31:1-3
5. Zephaniah 2:1-3

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.

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.