

# 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 Gynea 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](mailto: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): 1 Samuel 3:1-10

Picture in your mind the kind of person who you expect would hear from God.

I doubt very much that the image you had in mind was a young boy!

The story of Samuel's call is a relatively well known one but like many biblical stories that we are familiar with, we benefit from a closer look. In this case, we have a young man (Samuel) who hears from the Lord for the first time.

Samuel, whose name means "God hears", was an answer to prayer. His mother, Hannah, had received him as a result of prayer and had given him to the Lord when he was very young. He had lived with the high priest and, apparently, slept in the tabernacle. We are told that the word of the Lord was rare at this point in time – the time of the judges – and Samuel did not know the Lord.

What we find, however, is that Samuel has a heart posture inclined to listen. When the Lord calls him he responds immediately, jumping up and going to Eli! Three times he hears the voice of the Lord and three times mistakes the Lord's voice for Eli's. Two times Eli tells him to return to his bed, but on the third he realises what is happening and advises Samuel to respond "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." And this is exactly what Samuel does. Eli's experience guides Samuel.

He asks the Lord to continue to speak while acknowledging that he is the servant of the Lord whose task is to listen – which implies action in response. This provides a model for all who would hear from the Lord.

(It is worth noting that the message Samuel receives was not an easy one to act on. It was a word of judgement against Eli and his family!)

The word of the Lord continues to come to Samuel (3:19-21) and changes his life. He goes from being a boy ministering in the tabernacle to one of the most significant leaders in Israel's history. And it began with learning to recognise the voice of God.

We too, are changed by hearing from God and are invited to recognise his voice more and more readily. The story of Samuel provides us with some lessons. First, the Lord is willing to speak before we are necessarily ready to hear. Samuel's lack of familiarity with the voice of the Lord is almost comedic in the story. What stands out is his heart posture that makes hearing possible.

Second, we may need an Eli in our lives; someone who can help us discern the voice of God because they have become familiar with his voice.

Third, we can ask God to speak and then make space for him to do so. Like any conversation, we have to leave room for our conversation partner to reply to move the discussion forward.

Fourth, we can familiarise ourselves with the Lord's voice through Scripture; listening to the sorts of things he says, to prepare our hearts to hear from him.

## Questions to Ask

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. Have you ever heard the voice of God in a particularly significant way? Share a bit of that experience. How did that experience (or those experiences) change you as a follower of Jesus?
3. What have you done to facilitate hearing from God?
4. What are some of the obstacles to hearing from God?
5. If someone wanted to develop their recognition of God's voice, what would you tell them to do?

## A Prayer to Pray

Continue to 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

Try one of the pieces of advice from question 5 above and commit to it this week.

## Readings to Read This Week

The following passages are examples of God speaking.

Genesis 28:10-17

Exodus 3:1-14

Judges 6:11-24

Acts 26:4-18

Hebrews 1:1-4

## 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.

This coming Sunday, March 30<sup>th</sup>, is our first member's meeting for the year. Encourage your group to attend if they are able.

## 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.