

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): Matthew 28:18-20

The final practice in our series is “a multiplying ability to make disciples”. Our text is often referred to as “the great commission” and was a foundational text for overseas mission work. In this brief statement (that begs for a sequel – see Acts!) Jesus sends his disciples to make disciples of all nations. Marc made three observations about this commission, each with an important proviso.

First, that the desired outcome – a disciple – is one who is committed and faithful to Jesus. This is demonstrated in the two things they are to do: baptise disciples and teach them to obey all that Jesus has commanded. Baptism, as we saw a few weeks ago, is symbolic of our beliefs that we have been cleansed of our sin, raised to a new life, and of our commitment to live in light of those beliefs. And obedience to the commands of Jesus is a heart response to him (see John 14:15, 21; 15:10). In fact, it may be better to think in terms of faithfulness rather than commands since this emphasises the relationship that lies at the heart of our discipleship.

The proviso to this observation is that this kind of committed and faithful following is a process rather than an event. The New Testament speaks of maturity and fruitfulness; both imply a process. One does not become mature immediately and a tree doesn't bear fruit as soon as it is planted.

Second, the act of making disciples is meant to be “business-as-usual” for the church. The rest of the New Testament doesn't spend a great deal of time reflecting on the specific task of making disciples; it just narrates what the church did – made disciples. In the teaching, preaching, establishing new communities of faith, and appointing leaders – disciples were made. Making disciples isn't a task for super-churches or super-Christians. We are all called to become more committed and faithful and to encourage each other to do the same.

The proviso is that this is a messy process. All processes that deal with people are non-linear – two steps forward, one step back, ups and downs, fits and starts – all of this is normal. The New Testament is filled with examples of how difficult and messy discipleship can be. The epistles demonstrate this quite clearly. This means we should extend grace and kindness to others and ourselves when the life-long process of following Jesus is a little slow or dry.

Third, making disciples is a group project. Consider the number of people who are credited with participating in a film – hundreds of people play a part in 90 minutes of entertainment! How much more so with making disciples?! Who would be in your credit list? Who are those who would be credited with playing a role in your growth as a follower of Jesus?

The proviso is important. We do none of this without Jesus. The first and last words of the commission are about the authority Jesus has and his eternal presence with us. If our lives are a film, Jesus is the director! His resources and his presence are foundational to making disciples – just as it was for his own disciples.

For ultimately, it is an encounter with Jesus that is at the heart of discipleship. The encounter with him is the basis for our beliefs, our understanding, and our behaviours. If we get this back-to-front, we can substitute the encounter for religiosity – the soil from which Pharisaism grows!

Questions to Ask

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. Who is in your credit list as a disciple?
3. What has been most helpful for your growth and maturity as a follower of Jesus?
4. In what ways can we, as a community of faith, be more intentional about making our maturity business-as-usual?
5. What advice would you give to someone about growing as a disciple?
6. Of all the practices that we have examined, is there one that you feel the Holy Spirit may be leading you to focus on in the remainder of 2025? If so, which one and what is your next faithful step?

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

Begin a credits list of those who have contributed to your discipleship. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring people to mind and add to the list over the week – maybe even display it on the fridge or pop it into your Bible. There may be some unnamed people – “preacher at that youth event” – add them too!

Readings to Read This Week

The following passages focus on fruitfulness and maturity.

Matthew 7:15-20

John 15:1-17

Galatians 5:13-26

Ephesians 4:11-16

Hebrews 5:11-6:3

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. Encounter begins Sunday May 4. The Life Group resources will be those provided by Olive Tree Media.

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.