

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.



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): Luke 11:1-13

This week we turn to an abiding life of prayer as an indicator of a life changed by Jesus and a practice that Jesus uses to change us. Unlike delighting in the Word where we have many admonitions to meditate upon the Word but few narrative examples, our understanding of prayer comes primarily from the narrative examples. We are invited to discern the nature of prayer from the examples of prayer.

On Sunday we engaged in a biblical theology of prayer (which is not about the source of theology, but about an approach where we pay attention to how a theme – in this case prayer – unfolds with the story) by looking at a handful of passages.

The first instance of prayer in Scripture is in Genesis 24:12-14 in which Abraham's servant, searching for a wife for Isaac, prays to the "Lord, God of my master Abraham", laying out a complicated test for discerning the right woman to approach. While this kind of "testing" prayer is perhaps not an ideal model for prayer (see Deut. 6:16; Matt. 4:7) we learn a few things from this prayer. First, anyone can pray! The servant prays to the God of his master, not his own God. Here is someone who is uncertain of their relationship with God who is invited to pray and who is heard! Second, his prayer taps into the work of God. The Lord had promised to bless Abraham, so the servant's prayer was one that the Lord was motivated to respond to. Third, despite the test outlined, God graciously responds and answers his prayer before he had finished praying!

The second example was in 1 Samuel 1:9-17. Hannah is a barren woman who is one of two wives of a man named Elkanah. The relationship between the two women is toxic and Peninnah routinely provokes Hannah to tears. One time, while the family was at Shiloh to worship the Lord, Hannah ends up praying out of her anguish for a son. The Lord hears her prayer and a son is born to her who she names Samuel.

What is striking in her prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 in which the birth of her son is described in extraordinary theological ways as the very way God works in the world. In Samuel's birth, Hannah sees so much more than a son! This story invites us to see our requests in theological terms; as part of what God is doing in the world, not just in our lives.

There is also something about her willingness to come to the Lord when she was a mess – unable to eat due to her anguish and weeping. She comes to the house of the Lord and prays in such a way that the high priest assumes she's drunk! Sometimes we are unwilling to come to the Lord (at least in front of others) until we've got it at least a bit together!

The third text is Psalm 13 in which the psalmist has been experiencing the absence of God. This psalm invites us to ask what a successful prayer really is. Sometimes we can be tempted to think of successful prayers as those that are answered, but throughout Scripture we are reminded that prayer is one of the ways in which we communicate with God. Relationship with God is the goal – remember that Jesus' prayer that the cup might be taken away from him was not answered as he wished!

The final text is Luke 11:1-13 which brings the relationship with God to the fore; cast as children coming to their father! It also holds the grand plans of God – his kingdom and his will – side by side with our daily needs. Finally, it reminds us that God does delight in answering our prayers; he is generous and responsive to our requests.

There are many other passages that we could look at – Moses' intercession for Israel, Solomon's prayer of dedication, things that Paul has to say about prayer – but this might be enough for a start!

Questions to Ask

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. How has prayer contributed to your growth as a follower of Jesus?
3. What sorts of things have you done (or could you do) to foster the practice of prayer in your life in order that Jesus might transform you? Are there principles you consider when you think about prayer?

4. Has there been someone in your life who has been an inspiration and example to you in prayer? Describe them and what you have learned.
5. If a new believer or someone who was beginning to explore faith asked your advice on one thing to do to develop the practice of prayer, what might you say to them?

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

Select one of the pieces of advice from Question 5 and put it into practice as a group this week.

Readings to Read This Week

As you read the following passage about prayer consider what they teach us about the practice of prayer.

Exodus 33:7-17

2 Samuel 12:15-23

1 Kings 8:22-53

Luke 18:1-8

Ephesians 6:10-20

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.

Over the last few weeks we have been interviewing people from our community of faith who have been willing to speak about how a particular practice has changed them. The answers they have given to the three questions (How has this changed you? What have you done to foster that change? What advice would you give to someone else?) are not the “right” answers, but provide a touch point for us to continue thinking about them.

We have a number of topics coming up where we are looking for people who might be willing to share a bit with our congregation. If there are people in your group who might be willing to do so, please let Marc know at Marc.Rader@gymeabaptist.org.au. The topics are: Discerning the Voice of God, Reconciliation/Forgiveness, Being Prepared to Give an Answer, Making Disciples.

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.