

Introduction to GBC Life Group Resources

Life Groups are a critical ministry of our extra ordinary life together at Gynea 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.

LEARNING TO

Looking in  Luke's Gospel

PRAY WITH JESUS

Learning to Pray with Jesus: A Brief Introduction

One of our goals in 2024 is to identify and begin to develop one or two spiritual practices as a community of faith that align with our purpose as a church: to help each other respond to God's invitation to join in his mission. One of the practices we have identified is prayer and, given our DNA as a church, we felt that a good place to start our exploration of this practice was through a sermon series!

Luke's gospel is again our focus, as it has been all year, in part due to the simple fact that Luke's gospel mentions prayer more often than the other gospels and, when you include Acts (also written by Luke), there is a very clear connection between the practice of prayer and the practice of the church on mission.

A Brief Overview of This Week's Sermon

Key Text(s): Luke 11:1-13

“One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray.” (Luke 11:1) Have you ever wondered why the disciples would ask this of Jesus? Surely, as good Jewish men, they would have learned how to pray in synagogue and heard many rabbis teach on prayer. And regardless of why they asked, Jesus’ answer doesn’t appear – on the surface – to contain anything particularly new or revolutionary.

The model prayer he gives to his followers contains common elements of prayer throughout Scripture: praise, petition, repentance, and yielding. After Jesus provides them with a model to follow; a “how to” for prayer, he provides them with a “why”.

In the verses that follow the prayer Jesus makes some comparisons between God’s desire to respond to our prayers and our willingness to respond to similar requests made to us. In both cases we are invited to consider “How much more so...” God is to respond. He doesn’t require shameless audacity or paternal instinct to respond with good things, because he is good.

This desire of the Father to give good answers to our prayers is the context for the model prayer. When we praise, when we list our petitions, when we repent, and when we yield God gives us good answers. He leads, forgives, provides, and blesses. Our prayers don’t “work” because we get the right words in the right order at the right time, but because of who God is.

And it is because God answers those who ask, opens the door to those who knock, and if found by those who seek that we come to him in prayer. It is his desire to give us the good answer (which may not always be Yes, but is good) that motivates us to come to him in prayer.

While this may not have been new for the disciples, it is a profoundly important lesson for us to remember when we turn to the Father in prayer.

Questions to Ask

1. Jeremy divided the Lord’s prayer into four sections: praise, petition, repentance, and yielding. How else might we describe the various focuses in the prayer?
2. Have you ever had a “good answer” from God that wasn’t the answer you were hoping for? How did it turn out to be good?
3. Why is it so important to recognise that prayer “works” because of God, not because of us?
4. How do the four sections: praise, petition, repentance, and yielding inform and align with our call to participate in God’s mission in the world?

A Prayer to Pray

1. As a group, pray through the Lord’s prayer focusing on each section for a few minutes.

A Practice to Try

1. Use the Lord's prayer as your "base" prayer this week. Keep track of how using this prayer all week impacts your prayer.
2. If you kept a prayer journal or were On-Purpose to listen to God, share your experience. What did you find helpful? Difficult? Did you feel that God spoke to you in a particular way?

Readings to Read This Week

The readings are all prayers from the Old Testament. Consider the ways they reflect the emphases in the Lord's prayer.

1. 1 Chronicles 17:16-27
2. 2 Chronicles 6:14-42
3. 2 Chronicles 20:6-12
4. Nehemiah 1:5-11
5. Daniel 9:4-19

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 we reflect on prayer we are looking for where it aligns with and supports our engagement with our purpose: to help each other find our place in God's mission.

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.

On Sunday June 23 (11:30-1:00) we will be holding our mid-year member's meeting as well as an extraordinary meeting immediately following it. The mid-year meeting is a chance to report on how the year is going and the extraordinary meeting has been called for the purpose of adopting a new constitution.

While only members will be able to vote, all are welcome to the meetings, and the documentation can be found on GBC Links or request can be made for hard copies. People can attend onsite or via Zoom and the zoom link will be released on LinkTree (and in GBC Links) closer to the date.

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.