

# Where do you start?

GENTS Ministry starts not with a program or process, but with prayerful reflection on the question, "Have we, the men of our community, been what our boys need to become great men like Jesus?". This question is best asked collectively because the solution requires a team of men.

It only takes one man to make a start. The next step could be a dad coming on *GENTS Camp Father and Sons*, or a leader coming on *GENTS Camp SA*. Or, it can start with a man or father in a church wanting their community of faith to be the best place for boys to be as they work out who they are made to be.

If you have a team of invested men, with at least one representative for each significant developmental stage, you are well on your way.



## 2020 Camps

- GENTS Camp SA: Oct 3-6th
- GENTS Camp Father and Sons Nov: 13th-15th

more info: [www.wired-youth.com](http://www.wired-youth.com)



JEWELS Ministry has the same purpose for girls as GENTS Ministry has for boys. JEWELS Ministry currently is a step behind GENTS Ministry. It presently has a camp for teen girls in the Spring school holidays. If you know teen girls and women in your church who would like to be involved or know more, contact Hamilton McNicol at Scripture Union SA.

## What Next?

If you would like more information or want to take it further, contact Scripture Union SA's GENTS Ministry Coordinator:

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### What's the GENTS signet ring about?

Revelation 5 asks, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" The answer, the Lion of the tribe of Judah who was also the lamb who looked slain. And he was worthy "because with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."



GENTS Ministry models good authority on this principle. Authority is given when a person is worthy to wield it. The 18 year olds who do the initiation on GENTS Camp are given a signet ring to show they have proven themselves ready for responsibility over others by their committed and loving sacrificial service.



# GENTS MINISTRY



Every boy a beloved son  
Every man a spiritual father

# The Challenge

Young males have been leaving the Australian Church consistently for 60 years. According to the National Church Life Survey the least likely person you will find in a church is a young male. This trend is not mysterious. Research has shown that easily the most significant environmental factor in a boy taking faith into adult years is if they have a father with an active faith.

The Old Testament finishes with these poignant words:

*"Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and strike the land with a curse."* (Malachi 4:5-6)

Children (and particularly boys) become disconnected from God when fathers become disconnected from sons. This issue is not just affecting The Church. Fathers everywhere are becoming disconnected from their sons. This can be seen in the emerging adult generation turning not to Atheism as was anticipated, but to what the last Australian Census described as SBNR (Spiritual But Not Religious). This general disconnection feeds loneliness, depression, and anxiety which now are normal in and outside the church.

An over-dominant Western medical approach has resulted in psychotropic drugs (anti-depressants) being prescribed as standard for these challenges. However, the most current research says these are only needed about 5-8% of the time. The real problems are, in fact, in our soul; deep disconnection from people, community, and purposeful work. And behind this, a disconnection from God the Father.

*We... have become the first humans ever to dismantle our tribes. As a result, we have been left alone on a savanna we do not understand, puzzled by our own sadness.*

Johann Hari, *Lost Connections*



# Restoring Hearts

GENTS Ministry began in SA in 2014 with a rite of passage camp. This camp has seen campers (aged 13-70) return in increasing numbers year after year as boys have tasted what great community and manhood looks like. However, a great camp was never the goal. The broader mission of GENTS Camp always was:

## To develop in boys real manhood and authentic Christian faith

*We are not a healthy culture for boys or men. Not the only reason, but surely one reason is that we are no longer a culture of elders who know how to pass on wisdom, identity, and boundaries to the next generation. Most men are over mothered and under fathered - now even more in the age of single parents.*



R. Rohr

Though campers have been coming back every year to camp, they have found it hard returning to their churches. These consistently lack a community of men who they feel connected to, inspiring and supporting the boys how to live out Christian faith through key stages of young life into adulthood.

In 2019, *GENTS Camp Father and Sons* started and was a big success. This camp modelled four key ways fathers need to be involved in their sons' lives from early on; memorable story telling, encouraging adventure, teaching responsibility, and cultivating a deep trusting relationship.

This year, *GENTS 'My Tribe'* is kicking off. 'My Tribe' is the life and ministry that happens in communities that boys love to be a part of as they mature. 'My Tribe' has the motto:

## Discipling all boys for all of life, not just a few for Sunday leadership

# Partnership

The vision of GENTS Ministry in SA is vast in scope. Scripture Union SA, which runs GENTS Camp SA and GENTS Camp Father & Sons, knows that this is impossible without a substantial partnership with local churches. SUSU has great resources, but limited jurisdiction. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of a church community to have the final say on the virtuous shape of its men-to-be. The partnership with Scripture Union SA helps churches to navigate and own this venture while sharing learning and resources across communities.

## The Archetypal Man

GENTS Ministry is not trying to recover gender roles of the past. However, there are timeless traits of male nature, which when guided, help boys, men, and their communities to thrive. GENTS Ministry is informed by neuroscience, psychology, pedagogy, anthropology, sociology, and mythology. Yet the underlying theological conviction is that Jesus Christ is the archetypal man. And, in following him together we discover our foundational identity as beloved sons and spiritual fathers.

*One of the signs of a great society is the diligence with which it passes culture from one generation to the next. This culture is the embodiment of everything the people of that society hold dear; its religious faith, its heroes. When one generation no longer esteems its own heritage and fails to pass the torch to its children, it is saying in essence that the very foundational principles and experiences that make the society what it is are no longer valid. This leaves that generation without any sense of definition or direction, making them vulnerable to the dictum, 'A people without a heritage are easily persuaded.' What is required when this happens and the society has lost its way is for leaders to arise who have not forgotten the discarded legacy and who love it with all their hearts. They can then become the voice of that lost generation, wooing an errant generation back to the faith of their fathers, back to the ancient foundations and bedrock values.*



Winston Churchill (Pre WW II)