

GENTS SA MY TRIBE



Over the past few decades boys have been brought up increasingly by agents other than fathers and the wider connected 'village'. School, Google, gaming, social media, and pornography are the new source of life education and socialisation. Consequently, it is now normal for boys to be highly addicted, medicated, depressed, lonely, self-harming, and without joy and purpose in the world. The system is broken.

The failure of boys to launch is increasing (**full scope of problem [here](#)**). But its not their fault. Boys were designed to be in an intergenerational and interdependent tribe with many men and father figures involved through the key stages of development.

GENTS 'My Tribe' is the establishment of this interdependent and intergenerational male community across four key developmental stages that stretches into manhood. The last stage is where males find their life calling and their responsibilities as men and spiritual fathers in their tribe. Rather than boys drifting aimlessly as the get older, GENTS 'My Tribe' helps make your 'village' the place they most want to be as they become men.

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

The Meta-Father

As boys get older they seek to be powerful and influential. It is a significant milestone for a boy when he beats his father for the first time at something. But it signals the end of the era of the biological father being their hero. Boys in their teen years will start attaching themselves to other male role-models as they desire to imitate and emulate something bigger and better than their dad. No one man can fill this role, but it highlights a deep yearning in all males towards the Meta-father. The Meta-father is the archetype of meaning and virtue that naturally inspires and connects with the aspirations of all males towards greatness. If communities don't provide a community of good men who together represent that collective 'Meta-Father', boys will find substitutes for affirmation elsewhere. This makes them sitting ducks for those who don't have their best interests at heart.

"The number one factor enabling kids to rise is how many father figures there are generally in the community, more so than just a father in the home".



Roland G Fryer Jr
Professor of Economics
Harvard University



"I was not a hero. But I served in a company of heroes", said Major Richard Winters, one of the most celebrated men of the Allied Army

in WW II. He exemplified that great men raise others up and band them together to achieve a noble purpose. The enterprise of becoming a great man is a battle that requires a company of (ordinary) heroes. We invite churches to find a CoH who will represent the different developmental stages growing up. Each man in the CoH holds a deep conviction not to lose a boy in this war until the battle is won.

A Company of Heroes

GENTS 'My Tribe' helps communities to establish a Company of Heroes (COH) who will champion and take responsibility for the culture of how boys develop across the four key stages from age 7-24 years. The champion for each stage will probably be a dad with a son in the group, but doesn't have to be. Can you start without a champion for each? Yes, but get in touch to discuss further. What are these key stages about? Go to the website to find out more.

Each stage is best learnt by imitation of fathers and key male role models boys look up to. These help boys find belonging, purpose, affirmation, and wisdom as they imitate real men in the real world. Maturing from one stage to the next doesn't happen automatically. In fact, the key virtues for transition are delayed gratification (patience) and courage. This is taught through relationships. Part of this process involves captivating story telling that convinces boys that short term pain is often needed for a better long term outcome. Without this, boys will turn to dominating and abusing their world as their insecure and immature egos project blame and avoid taking responsibility for themselves.

Developmental Stages

Young people go through developmental stages. When done successfully these layer upon each other until they become adults and are able to be joyful despite the unforgiving and brutal realities of the real world. Modern psychology has shown how important these stages are and how unresolved issues at earlier stages create big issues at later stages. At each stage, males face a particularly male battle around how to be powerful and influential in a good way. Courage is necessary at each stage for maturity to occur. However, courage is not the default. Anxiety and avoidance is. Boys need men to visually demonstrate courage and partner them to overcome fear and anxiety. More info about these stages can be found on the website.

COURAGE

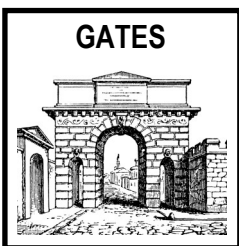
In ancient Jewish culture, the rams horn (shofar) became a symbol of the role of men in their communities. The horn was blown to prompt courage for men to engage in either the

- 1) external battle when facing an enemy, or the more difficult
- 2) internal battle when facing their own sin on the Day of Atonement



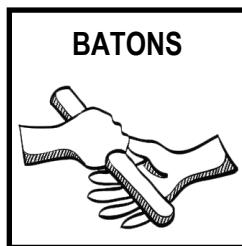
What does the COH do?

The COH take ownership of the practices that shape good culture. Scripture Union SA support COH's to establish a practice for this oversight. Specifically, the COH shape culture around three biblical principles of how men have taken responsibility for their boys and communities in times past. These are represented by the symbols



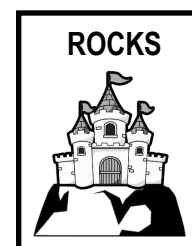
GATES

The gates were where men vetted people entering the city and took part in legal and other proceedings that affected the integrity of the cities culture. "Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the gates" (Amos 5:15)



BATONS

The Levites were the men who mediated and maintained a healthy relationship between Israel and God. They had a clear mandate for how to pass this responsibility on:
1) Training, 2) Leading, and 3) Mentoring (Num. 8:23-26)



ROCKS

The rock is a familiar biblical symbol for God, Jesus, and the Apostle Peter*. It was a particularly masculine image that represented confidence, security, presence, strength and reliability. Jesus said "on this rock I will build my church" (Matt 16:18)

What does each champion within the COH do?

There are four types of critical engagement with boys that stays the same from 7-24 years of age. These activities shape the hearts, minds, and character of boys. These types of engagement evolve as boys get older and go through different stages. They are:

- Captivating story telling
- Nurturing close relationships
- Passing on responsibility
- Encouraging challenge & adventure

The stage group champion works together with the COH to connect these groups in key events/activities across the year. They also help all boys within their focus age group to do things more regularly (once a term?) that is specific to them. The wheel won't need to be reinvented and small things can even be done every week within the existing culture and rhythms of the church community and families. More info can be found on these on the website.

Scripture Union SA supports each stage champion to foster these within their community in a number of ways:

- The GENTS SA Camp for 13-70 year olds
- The GENTS Father and Sons camp
- Connecting stage champions with a community of practice
- Being supported by a Scripture Union SA GENTS Ministry Coach
- A website with ideas and resources for the COHs



Scripture Union's goal is for wisdom to move from external sources to living and dynamic within a community. The biblical image of fathering is lofty. God the Father is ultimately the Meta-father we desire and the ideal we want to pursue, made achievable through Jesus. Join a community of great men in life's greatest pursuit.

"He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their sons, and the hearts of the sons to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction" Malachi 4:5-6

GENTS Ministry

GENTS 'My Tribe' is part of the GENTS Ministry suite. This includes GENTS Camp SA, and GENTS Camp SA Fathers & Sons. For more information on the whole suite, visit <https://www.wired-youth.com/gents>. To establish a tribe in your community or just to have a chat, get in touch with Hamilton McNicol: hamilton@susa.org.au