

MEN



YOU'RE INVITED TO THE TABLE



GOD HAS CREATED US FOR RELATIONSHIP – WITH HIM AND OTHERS. THAT INCLUDES MEETING WITH OTHERS TO SHARE OUR LIVES AND FIND SUPPORT. MEN DON'T ALWAYS FIND THAT EASY. IT'S HEALTHY TO SHOW EMOTION AND SHARE FEELINGS, YET FOR MANY MEN IN THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER BLOKES, THE TALK IS MOSTLY ABOUT FOOTY OR WORK.

JESUS OFTEN MET WITH OTHERS OVER FOOD. IT WAS A PLACE OF WELCOME, WARMTH AND CONNECTION. JESUS IS STILL PRESENT AT HIS TABLE, AND HE LONGS FOR PEOPLE TO MEET WITH HIM.

Every day in Australia, approximately seven men die by suicide. In Australia, men are three times more likely to die by suicide than women. Men are less likely to seek help for mental health conditions than women. In Australia, one in five men will experience an anxiety condition in their lifetime and one in seven will experience depression.

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/media/statistics>

The model for men's ministry below has been trialled at Maroubra Corps (NSW) by Lieutenant Keven Williams and is adapted from The Men's Table, a not-for-profit organisation that operates across Australia. Its purpose is to provide a safe place for men to share and be heard in a confidential and safe environment, creating a greater sense of belonging and connection.

A table works best with six to 10 men. This allows for all participants to listen, share, support, and get to know one another.

The first step in joining a table is to attend an introductory event. This gives the men an opportunity to get a feel for how the table works and see if it's a good fit. There is no obligation to join a table after attending an introductory meeting.



INTRODUCTORY MEETING

Share a meal together around a common table.

While the men are eating, explain that they will all be asked to speak for five minutes to tell the group about themselves. (This can include anything they care to share, such as the important people in their lives, where they grew up, what they enjoy doing, how they relax, what causes them stress, etc.). They will then be asked the question:

WHAT BRINGS YOU TO THE GROUP? WHY HAVE YOU CHOSEN TO COME TONIGHT?

The other men are asked to listen and not interrupt or question while a person is speaking. Each person will have five minutes to speak, then the facilitator will ask them to draw to a close. This time management is an important part of the facilitator's role and ensures all the men get an equal opportunity to share and listen.

The facilitator first models this by speaking about himself.

They will then invite others to speak.

At the end of this introductory meeting, invite the men to consider being part of an ongoing Come to the Table group that agrees to meet each month for the coming year. This includes a commitment to regularly attend the gathering. A regular meeting of the men is important to build trust and safety.



COME TO THE TABLE MEETING

As people are seated together and begin eating, invite any new members to the group to take five minutes to introduce themselves. Ask them to answer the question:

WHAT BRINGS YOU TO THE GROUP?

WHY HAVE YOU CHOSEN TO COME TO THE GROUP?

Then, each man is invited to speak for five to 10 minutes and share responses to the following questions:

- What's been happening for you in the past month?
- What is something that is on your mind that you'd like to share today?

As established in the first meeting, this is a time when the group is asked to listen and not to comment or interrupt the person speaking.

After each man has shared for their five to 10 minutes, the facilitator asks the speaker:

WOULD YOU LIKE ANY COMMENTS OR FEEDBACK — OR WOULD YOU PREFER TO JUST SHARE TODAY?

Ask the group to provide encouraging and supportive comments or feedback. This includes providing suggestions to consider, but not telling a person what to do. The facilitator should take care to protect the safety of this response time and make sure that all feedback remains encouraging and supportive of the sharer.

The facilitator needs to be the time-keeper and ensure people are wrapping up after 10 minutes of sharing.

At the end of the evening, the facilitator closes by thanking the men for their participation and praying for the group, committing the men to God – and assuring them of his loving presence in their lives.

OTHER RESOURCE IDEAS TO BEGIN COME TO THE TABLE

The following activities are suggestions to help 'break the ice', encourage people to grow in self-awareness, and get people sharing a little about themselves.



WHAT DO YOU LIKE OR EVEN LOVE TO DO?

playing sport	listening to music	art
cooking	picnics	beach
bushwalking	computer games	shopping
gardening	reading	dancing
surfing	biking	dog-walking
eating	playing with my kids	playing music
watching sport	seeing friends	gym
_____	_____	movies

Self-awareness helps us to understand ourselves better and recognise those things that make us happy, angry, sad, or anxious.

Without some self-understanding, we find it very difficult to understand others. As we get to know ourselves better, we also learn about our strengths and weaknesses.



HOW ARE YOU FEELING?

This can be a hard question! Some of us find it hard to express our feelings or emotions. Sometimes we just don't have the words to help us talk about our feelings.

EMOTIONS OR FEELINGS ARE NEITHER GOOD NOR BAD.

Self-awareness is the ability to recognise our emotions and know our strengths and limits. Many of us find it hard to recognise our emotions. If we can recognise and understand our emotions, we can avoid reacting to events and emotions, and learn to choose our preferred response to any situation.

There are FOUR main emotions. Listed under each are some related feelings. Choose a word or two that best describes how you are feeling tonight.

Sadness	Anger	Happiness	Fear
gloomy	irritated	joyful	scared
helpless	offended	content	worried
hurt	hurt	hopeful	afraid
miserable	frustrated	connected	insecure
tired	furious	interested	ashamed
drained	mad	loved	stressed
guilty	criticised	cheerful	nervous



WHEN HAVE YOU FELT THESE EMOTIONS?

Think about times when you have felt angry, happy, sad and anxious. These are four common and powerful emotions. It is helpful to be able to recognise times when you have experienced them — and how you tend to react to them.

I FELT SAD WHEN...

**I FELT
HAPPY
WHEN**

...

**EMOTIONS
FEELINGS**

**I FELT
ANGRY
WHEN**

...

I FELT ANXIOUS OR WORRIED WHEN...

WRITE DOWN FIVE THINGS YOU CAN BE THANKFUL FOR AND SHARE A COUPLE WITH US:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____



WHO ARE YOU?

We are not always as other people see us. Many make a judgement about a person by what they see and hear. Below is a list of questions and statements that might apply to you. Let's see what we can learn about you.

Choose one of the following questions or statements to share with the group. Think about your response before you speak about it. You may be surprised by what you learn about yourself.

- What was the best thing that happened to you last week?
- What do you like to do best of all?
When was the last time you did it?
- What do you enjoy most about your life?
- What are you most afraid of right now?
- Tell us about a special person in your life.
- Who is an influential person in your life?
- One thing that I really like about myself is ...
- I feel lonely when ...
- I like people who ...
- I get angry with people who ...
- I feel really good when ...
- I find it hard to ...
- It is important to me that ...
- Today, I'm thankful for ... sponding to these emotions.

