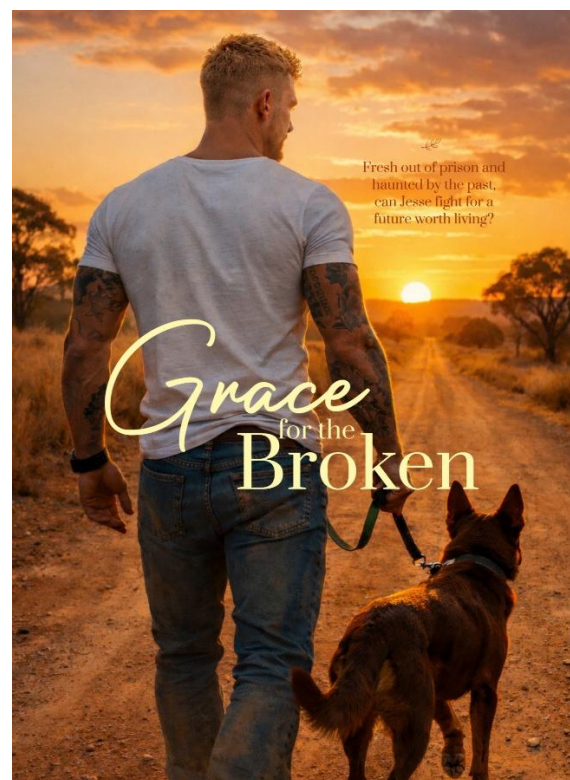
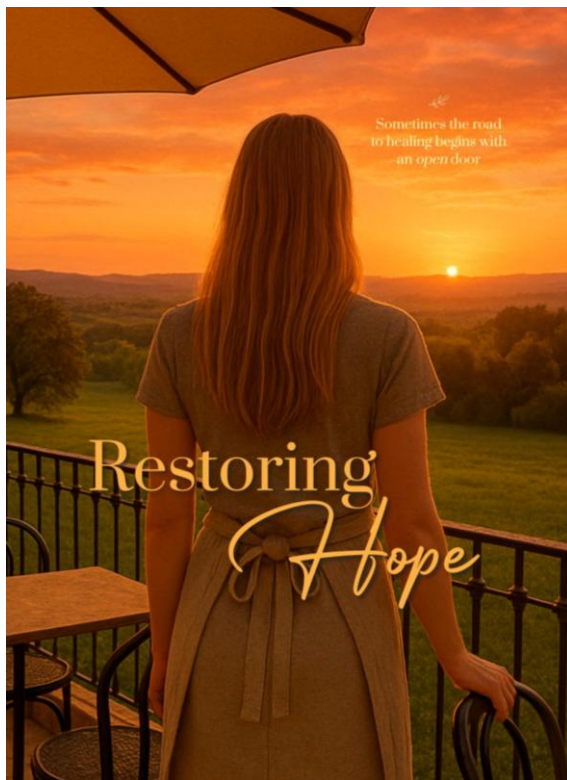


HEALTHY MEN

HELPING MEN

TO GROW SAFER RELATIONSHIPS

A DISCUSSION GUIDE
USING SCENARIOS FROM



GREG AND PHILIPPA CLEALL

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The extracted scenarios from *Restoring Hope* and *Grace for the Broken* are a work of fiction inspired by themes, stories, and ideas. While they may reference or draw from real experiences, figures, or sacred texts, all the characters, interpretations, and events depicted are fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or to actual events is purely coincidental.

This guide is provided for educational purposes only. The contents are not professional advice. Facilitators should refer to 1800RESPECT or specialist services for support with any domestic and family violence concerns. Volunteer protection applies (NSW Civil Liability Act s64). No participant data will be centrally held. Facilitators to maintain their own group records.

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Introduction

This discussion guide is written for men to facilitate with men who care about the safety and wellbeing of women and children, but who may feel unsure about how to help, where they fit, or what meaningful action looks like when it comes to domestic and family violence.

Many men do not see themselves as violent or abusive yet still feel unsettled by the prevalence of domestic violence in our communities. They love their wives, daughters, sisters, friends, and partners. But when harm happens close to home, within families, workplaces, churches, community or friendship groups, uncertainty often takes over. Is this really my place to intervene? What if I get it wrong? What if I make things worse?

This guide exists to help address that gap.

The discussions in this guide are anchored in selected scenes from *Restoring Hope* and *Grace for the Broken* for a deliberate reason. A story creates a shared reference point that allows men to engage honestly with complex and confronting realities without placing pressure on anyone to disclose personal experiences or identify real people or situations. Using realistic fictional narratives helps keep conversations grounded, focused, and emotionally safe, while protecting anonymity and dignity for everyone in the room. The scenes allow participants to explore behaviour, silence, responsibility, and impact at a slight distance, close enough to feel real, but far enough to prevent conversations from becoming personal, accusatory, or unsafe.

As the guide progresses, the scenes open space for reflection on the ways domestic violence is misunderstood, minimised, or overlooked, and how well-intentioned men can sometimes remain silent or unsure when action is needed. The initial session focuses on men who want to help but don't yet know how. They explore why stepping in can feel risky, how loyalty and discomfort can override safety, and what it means to believe women without turning ourselves into judges or investigators.

Then, sessions introduce a narrative of a group of men attending a behaviour change program, not to invite self-confession, but to deepen understanding of the domestic violence cycle and the patterns that sustain harm. Through this, participants are invited to recognise that domestic violence is not limited to physical acts, but often involves intimidation, coercion, emotional abuse, and control. These are behaviours that thrive in silence and denial. The focus remains on understanding, not diagnosing, awareness, not accusation.

The final session shifts attention toward action. Participants are encouraged to consider how safe men can actively step up by challenging unsafe attitudes, responding appropriately to disclosures, supporting accountability, and helping to shape communities where truth, responsibility, and protection matter more than comfort or reputation.

This guide is not about shaming men, nor is it about rescuing or fixing others. It is about the men having the courage to listen carefully, reflect honestly, and recognise the influence they already carry. Change begins when safe men choose to be more than bystanders and understand that their voices, responses, and silence all matter.

That is where this journey begins.

Facilitator Guide: Supporting Safe Men to Become Part of the Solution

1. Who This Guide Is For

This guide is written primarily for:

- Men who support organisations working with women affected by domestic and family violence
- Men who want to understand how violence occurs and how it can be prevented
- Men who want practical ways to challenge harmful attitudes and support safer communities

It is not a replacement for professional Men's Behaviour Change Programs, nor is it designed to assess or treat men who are demonstrating violent behaviour. Instead, it offers a reflective, educational space for men who want to grow in awareness and be part of the solution.

2. Shift from Self to Awareness

Reflections should be focused around:

- situations they've witnessed
- attitudes that are absorbed
- cultural messages they've heard about masculinity, strength, or loyalty

Helpful language during discussions:

- “What messages have men been taught about this?”
- “What makes stepping in feel risky?”
- “What do we tend to excuse or overlook?”

This keeps discussions relevant without turning the room into a personal disclosure space.

3. Keep the Lens on Influence, Not Guilt

Safe men often underestimate their influence.

Encourage reflections on:

- what men laugh off or stay silent about
- how male loyalty can override safety
- the impact of disbelief or minimisation
- what it communicates when no one intervenes

4. Watch for Defensive Alignment With Harmful Behaviour

Even safe men may instinctively defend “other men” or feel personally accused.

Common responses:

- “Not all men do this.”
- “We don’t know the whole story.”
- “Some women are abusive too.”

Facilitator redirection:

- “It sounds like this is bringing up some discomfort. That’s okay. This space isn’t about labelling people as bad, we’re looking honestly at behaviours and their impact. Let’s stay with that.”
- “We’re not talking about all men, we’re talking about real patterns of behaviour.”
- “Yes, some women are abusive in relationships, but as men we are here to learn how we can help men who are being harmful. If you know any male friends who are feeling unsafe in their relationship, encourage them to contact RESPECT 1800 and to implement safe boundaries for the protection of themselves and their children.”

This keeps the group aligned with purpose rather than debate.

5. Avoid Turning the Group Into a Courtroom

Safe men may want proof, fairness, or full context before believing harm.

Gentle reframes:

- “Believing doesn’t mean we are convicting anyone.”
- “Listening doesn’t mean taking sides.”
- “Supporting safety isn’t the same as judging guilt.”

This helps men understand supportive action without fear of false accusation.

6. Use the Fictional Scenes as the Container

The scenes from *Restoring Hope* and *Grace for the Broken* are the primary discussion anchor.

If conversation drifts into hypotheticals or personal opinions, bring it back to the text. Ask:

- “What did you notice in this scene?”
- “Why might a man respond this way?”

This keeps discussion emotionally safe and focused.

7. Clarify That “Safety” Includes More Than Physical Violence

Safe men often equate domestic violence with physical assault.

Reinforce gently:

- fear, intimidation, control, and coercion are safety issues
- children are impacted even if not directly harmed
- community silence increases risk

Avoid graphic detail; focus on patterns and impact.

8. Prepare Men for the Final Shift to Action

As sessions progress, help men move from concern to responsibility.

Ask:

- “What could stepping up look like in ordinary moments?”
- “Who are the men you have influence with?”
- “What gets in the way of saying something?”

Emphasise:

- small actions matter
- courage is often quiet

9. Maintain Emotional Safety Without Avoiding Depth

Safe men may still feel grief, anger, or discomfort.

Facilitator guidance:

- acknowledge emotion without asking for personal disclosure
- don’t rush to reassurance
- allow silence

Helpful phrasing:

- “It makes sense that this feels heavy.”
- “Awareness can be uncomfortable, that’s part of growth.”

10. End With Responsibility, Not Resolution

Close sessions by reinforcing:

- awareness precedes action
- no one is being asked to “fix” violence alone
- safety is a shared responsibility

Suggested closing:

“Being a safe man isn’t passive. It’s an active choice we need to make.”

A Final Word for Facilitators

You are not leading men toward shame or self-examination of harm. You are leading them toward moral clarity, courage, and responsibility.

Safe men are essential to prevention. When they understand the dynamics of domestic violence, believe women, and refuse silence, communities change.

That is the work this guide is inviting them into.

For Groups in Faith-Based Environments

This discussion guide may be used in church or faith-based settings where participants hold strong beliefs about gender roles, leadership, and family structure. In some contexts, including those shaped by complementarian theology, conversations about domestic violence can trigger defensiveness, confusion, or fear that faith itself is being challenged.

It is important to name early that this guide is not a theological debate about marriage roles, nor is it an attempt to undermine faith, scripture, or the importance of family. Rather, it is a conversation about safety, responsibility, and the use of power. These themes sit at the very heart of Christian ethics.

Key Principles for Facilitators

1. Separate leadership from control

Many men have been taught that “leading” means deciding, directing, or maintaining authority. This guide invites reflection on a different question:

How is leadership expressed when safety, dignity, and freedom are at stake?

Helpful reframes:

- Leadership that instills fear is not biblical leadership.
- Authority that silences or intimidates contradicts the call to love.
- Strength given by God is not for control, but for protection and care.

You are not required to argue theology, simply hold the line that fear and harm are incompatible with faith.

2. Expect Scripture to be used defensively

Some participants may reference verses about submission, headship, forgiveness, or endurance in suffering.

Facilitator guidance:

- Do not debate proof texts.
- Gently redirect to outcomes and impact.
- Ask reflective questions rather than offering rebuttals.

For example:

- “How do we recognise when ‘headship’ becomes harmful?”
- “What does love look like when someone feels afraid?”
- “Would Jesus’ leadership ever rely on fear or intimidation?”

Keep the focus on lived reality rather than abstract interpretation.

3. Address the myth of male responsibility meaning sole authority

A common belief is that men must be “in charge” to keep families safe.

Clarify gently:

- Responsibility does not require dominance.
- Safety grows through mutual respect, accountability, and choice.
- Being responsible includes listening, believing, and stepping aside when harm is present.

4. Guard against spiritual minimisation of harm

Be alert to language that spiritualises or softens abuse, such as:

1. “We’re all sinners.”
2. “Grace covers this.”
3. “Marriage is hard for everyone.”
4. “God hates divorce.”

Facilitator response:

- Acknowledge faith, then return to safety.
- Name that grace never requires enduring harm; biblical repentance always includes turning away from sin and from patterns that cause fear.
- Reinforce that accountability and repentance are inseparable.

A useful statement:

“Forgiveness does not remove the need for truth, safety, or change.”

5. Reassure participants they are not being accused

Faith-based men may fear being labelled abusive simply for holding traditional views.

Name explicitly:

- This guide is for safe men.
- Reflection is not accusation.
- Growth does not equal guilt.

This reassurance helps men stay present rather than shutting down.

6. Hold firm boundaries when safety is threatened

If discussions begin to justify control, dismiss fear, or prioritise reputation over protection, facilitators must intervene clearly and calmly.

You are not being divisive by naming harm.

You are being faithful.

A Note of Encouragement for Faith-Based Facilitators

Some churches have unintentionally protected harm by prioritising unity, forgiveness, or male authority over safety and truth. This guide offers a way forward that does not abandon faith, it actually deepens it.

When safe men learn to use their influence to protect rather than control, faith communities become places of refuge rather than silence.

How to Use This Guide

This discussion guide is designed to be used in small groups of men who are committed to learning, reflecting, and contributing to safer relationships and communities. While it can be used by a range of settings—including community organisations, faith groups, and informal men's gatherings—its effectiveness depends on the tone and care with which it is facilitated.

Group Size and Format

- Recommended group size: 4–8 participants
- Sessions: 4 sessions, ideally spaced weekly or fortnightly
- Session length: 60–90 minutes

Smaller groups allow for deeper discussion, greater trust, and safer conversations. Each session focuses on a passage from one of the novels, followed by guided reflection questions.

The Role of the Facilitator

The facilitator's role is not to lecture or provide all the answers, but to:

- Hold a safe, respectful, and accountable space
- Keep discussions focused on behaviour, impact, and responsibility
- Interrupt minimising, denial, or victim-blaming if it arises
- Encourage listening over debating or defending

Facilitators do not need to be experts, but they do need to be prepared to gently challenge harmful assumptions and bring conversations back to the purpose of the guide: reducing harm and increasing safety.

Where possible, facilitators should familiarise themselves with concepts around domestic and family violence, particularly coercive control.

Creating Safety in the Room

Before beginning Session One, it is strongly recommended that the group agrees to some shared expectations, such as:

- Confidentiality (with clear limits if safety concerns arise)
- Respectful listening without interruption
- Reflecting on provided scenes, not discussing other people's relationships

- Willingness to sit with discomfort
- No justification of violence or abuse

This guide may surface strong emotions, defensiveness, or discomfort. These reactions are normal and can be part of meaningful change when handled with care.

Using the Novel Extracts

The novel passages are included to:

- Create emotional distance that allows honest reflection
- Help participants recognise patterns of harm without feeling they are intruding on lives
- Invite empathy for those affected by violence

Participants are encouraged to:

- Read or listen carefully to the extract
- Notice their own reactions in agreement, resistance, discomfort, recognition
- Reflect on how similar dynamics can appear in real life and communities

The goal is not to analyse the literature, but to use the story as a mirror.

Reflection Questions

The reflection questions are intentionally open-ended. Not every question needs to be answered by every participant. Facilitators may:

- Select a few key questions if time is limited
- Allow silence and reflection before responses
- Redirect discussion if it becomes abstract or detached from real-world impact

Participants should be encouraged to reflect honestly, rather than offering what they think is the “right” answer.

Important Considerations

- If a participant discloses any current violence or risk of harm, facilitators should prioritise safety and refer to appropriate professional services.
- This guide should never be used to pressure any person to forgive, reconcile, or remain in unsafe relationships.
- Change is a process. Awareness is a beginning, not an endpoint.

Structure of Sessions

The following material is designed to be facilitated over 4 sessions. This can be condensed or extended as needed for different group environments.

The intention is for the guide to be used in the following way:

Session 1 –

1.1 – Becoming Men Who Want to Help

1.2 – Invitations To Do the Work

Session 2 –

2.1 – Motivations

2.2 – Men Owning Their Own Mirror

Session 3 –

3.1 – Through Their Partner's Eyes

3.2 – Listening To Truth

Session 4 –

4.1 – Women Who Harm

4.2 – Stepping Up to Help

Facilitator Introduction to the First Session

Facilitator's Sample Opening Script

“Before we begin, I want to acknowledge that this isn’t an easy topic. Talking about domestic and family violence, power, and responsibility can bring up discomfort, resistance, or strong emotions. That is normal. This group isn’t about shaming men or labelling people as ‘good’ or ‘bad’. It *is* about honesty, responsibility, and learning how men can contribute to safer relationships and communities.

Violence against women is not just a women’s issue. It is also a men’s issue, and therefore a community issue. Domestic and family violence affects our neighbours, colleagues, sporting clubs, and community organisations; it is everyone’s business, not just a private family matter. Change only happens when men are willing to talk honestly with other men about attitudes and behaviours that cause harm.

Across Australia, women and children continue to be harmed and killed by men they know, trust, or once loved. Australian Femicide Watch (*The Red Heart Campaign*) * recorded that in 2025 alone, **77 women and 26 children** lost their lives as in Australia as a result of murder or manslaughter from a partner or previous partner. However, beyond this, thousands of women were injured. These are not just statistics; they represent lives cut short, families devastated, and communities left carrying deep and lasting trauma.

And yet, many men remain silent.

Survey data by the *Our Watch* organisation in 2024** revealed that four in five men surveyed said they want to change the alarming rates of violence against women, although 43% said that they personally don’t feel able to do anything. While this discomfort is real, silence and inaction come at a cost. When safe men look away, harmful attitudes and behaviours are allowed to continue unchecked.

Being a safe man is not simply about avoiding violence yourself. It is about being an **active participant** in shaping a world where women, children, and vulnerable people can live without fear, and where safety is not negotiable and accountability is normal. It means being willing to listen, to reflect, to challenge other men, and at times to sit with discomfort for the sake of change.

This discussion guide, *Healthy Men Helping Men to Grow Safer Relationships*, is designed to support men in doing exactly that work.

It’s important to say clearly what this group is, and what it isn’t.

This is not a therapy group, and it’s not a Men’s Behaviour Change Program. It’s a reflective discussion space for men who want to understand how harm happens, how it’s minimised or ignored, and what healthier responses look like.

We’ll be using short passages from novels. These stories give us some distance, they’re not about anyone in this room, but they reflect very real situations. As we discuss them, I invite you to notice your reactions: agreement, discomfort, defensiveness, recognition. Those reactions are often where the most learning happens.

Before we go further, I want us to name what matters most here: **safety**.

The safety of women and children needs to come before our comfort, reputation, or loyalty to other men. If harm or fear is named in our discussions, we don't explain it away or defend it, we take it seriously.

Changing ideas and perspectives can take time. What is expected here is a willingness to listen, to reflect honestly, and to stay open, even when something feels challenging.

Before we begin, it is important that we agree on some shared expectations:

- Confidentiality (with clear limits if safety concerns arise)
- Respectful listening without interruption
- Reflecting on provided scenes, not discussing other people's relationships
- Willingness to sit with discomfort
- No justification of violence or abuse

Are there any concerns about respecting these in our sessions?

If at any point during these sessions you feel overwhelmed, you're free to step out or let me know. Support is available, and safety always comes first.

Let's begin our first session."

* <https://australianfemicidewatch.org/database/>

** [Our Watch | Four in five men want to stop violence against women, but...](#)

1.1 - BECOMING MEN WHO WANT TO HELP

Session Goal: For men to recognise the importance of becoming part of the solution to reduce and stop domestic violence.

Extract from *Restoring Hope* – Chapter 30

- Tom Harvey (55 yr old trained pastoral supervisor)
- Dave Sullivan (44 yrs old, community police officer, married with two young daughters)
- Joe Butler (42 yrs old, community vet, widower, dating a woman who has left an abusive relationship)
- Steve (42 yrs old, married with a 7yr old daughter, has enabled others in coercive control and violence)

Tom spoke to the men he had invited over for a coffee after there was a woman harmed in their community and they did not recognise the offender's behaviours. "It's hard to admit we've been taken in. Harder still to admit we didn't act when we should have. Sometimes we cling to a person's story because the alternative is admitting we were wrong. But pride doesn't protect people, it only protects our egos. And we weren't called to that."

Joe looked up slowly. "So, what do we do now?"

Tom's voice was steady. "We live differently. We stay alert. We listen. We can believe women when they speak. We don't leave them to carry danger or unsafe situations alone. We make sure that this town becomes the kind of place where truth and protection aren't optional."

He leaned back slightly, eyes kind but firm.

"It's not too late to be the kind of men we're called to be. The kind who protect others. Who pursue truth."

Steve glanced at Tom, his face tense. "But how do we know where that line is? I mean every guy raises his voice sometimes. We're not all manipulators."

Tom looked at him steadily. "No, we're not. But we are responsible for how we use our voices. Our strength. And if someone says they were afraid, or that behaviours make them feel unsafe, we have to ask why. Not defend people first."

Steve looked away, jaw tight.

Dave looked around the table. "It's not just about what happened with the man who abused a woman in our community, it's about what kind of community we're building. What kind of men we're encouraging. I've got two daughters. And I want them growing up in a place where men understand that we weren't given strength to control and intimidate, but to carry carefully. To protect. Not exploit."

Reflection Questions

1. Often safe men are concerned when they hear statistics e.g. one in three women are exposed to domestic violence (DV) in their lifetime*. Why then, aren't more men motivated to ask, how can I be part of the solution to reducing DV?
2. What fears or beliefs can stop men from stepping in to help when they witness disrespectful behaviour towards women?
3. Dave states that men were not given greater physical strength to control or intimidate women, but instead to protect them. What beliefs about power or entitlement result in some men wanting to control women rather than to protect them?
4. Do you think that men who perpetrate domestic violence consider the impact on their children when they are violent or controlling at home?

* World Health Organisation, 2024

1.2 - INVITATIONS TO DO THE WORK

Session Goal: To consider what accountability requires, why change is resisted, and how motivation to change can grow.

Extract from *Grace for the Broken* – Chapter 6

- Evan (34 yrs old mechanic, has had multiple AVOs, separated from partner and 6 yr old daughter Lily)
- Alek (32 yrs old labourer, wife left him due to violence, 4 yr old son)

Local Police Officer Dave wasn't looking forward to the afternoon's conversations he needed to have. But he knew nothing in these men's lives would shift until they did.

His first stop was the mechanics, where Evan had been working since his last court appearance.

The clang of tools and the smell of oil filled the shed. Evan was half-buried under the hood of a Ford, hands black with grease. He glanced up when Dave's boots crunched on the concrete, then went back to tightening a bolt that didn't need tightening.

Dave waited until the rattle stopped.

"You said you wanted to see Lily again," Dave began, voice even. "That doesn't start with a judge. It starts with you."

Evan snorted. "So now I've gotta sing kumbaya with a shrink to see my daughter?"

Dave stayed steady. "No. You need to learn how not to scare people. That's what this is about."

Evan's jaw hardened. "People exaggerate."

"Do they?" Dave asked quietly. "You scared a six-year-old and broke her dog's leg. That's not exaggeration. This Men's Behaviour Change Group I told you about could change your life and hers for the better." Dave didn't raise his voice. He didn't need to. The truth had its own weight.

Evan wiped his hands on a rag and muttered, "I'll think about it."

"That's all I'm asking," Dave said. He turned to go. "But thinking won't change anything if you never act."

Inside his sister's house, Alek sat at the kitchen table, arms crossed, eyes wary

Dave stayed standing. "There's a group starting up," he said. "It's not soft, but it's honest. If you want to be different, this is one way forward."

Alek looked at him hard. "You think this will make people forget?"

Dave shook his head. "No. I think it'll help you remember who you wanted to be."

Reflection Questions

1. What makes taking responsibility for harmful behaviour harder than feeling regret?
2. Alek asked, will attending a men's behaviour change group help people forget his harm. Can men be motivated to change even if their partner never forgets what happened?
3. Do you think it is likely that these men's relationships will be fixed by them attending the Behaviour Change group?
4. What real change do you think would be required of a man like Evan to become safe?

2.1 - MOTIVATIONS

Session Goal: To identify personal reasons to change and to understand controlling behaviours.

Extract from *Grace for the Broken* – Chapter 8

(First Session of Men's Behaviour Change Group)

Men's Group Facilitator: Scott, 53 yrs old, psychologist and previous prison chaplain

Group Participants

- Evan (34 yrs old mechanic, has had multiple AVOs, separated from partner Nova and 6 yr old daughter Lily)
- Brendan (23 yrs old electrician, partner left him due to alcohol and violence)
- Alek (32 yrs old labourer, wife left him due to violence, 4 yr old son)
- Steve (42 yrs old, married with an 8yr old daughter, enabled others violence)
- Mike (40 yrs old, married with 2 sons at primary school, enabled others violence)

"Let's go over a few ground rules," Scott said, his voice even. "No blaming anyone else. Not your ex-partners, not the police, not the courts. This group is for you. If you're here to point fingers, this won't work."

Scott continued, "Confidentiality is key in these sessions, but if anyone here is putting someone in danger, I'll break your confidentiality. We're here for the work. No one's here to be saved from the harm they are causing ... by the Pastor or anyone else. You need to work on yourself."

Scott cleared his throat. "Alright, now let's get to it. I want you to tell us who you are and why you're here. But let's keep it real. Don't waste anyone's time."

There was a long silence.

Then Steve decided to speak first. With gaze fixed straight ahead he began in a confident voice. "I'm Steve. Been married for... a while now. Things are okay at home. My wife sometimes has the wrong idea about things, but I help her to get a clearer perspective. Anyway, I'm here to get more information about keeping things under control."

Evan, arms crossed, leaned back in his chair. He looked more like he was waiting for a fight than an intervention. "Evan. I'm only here because I have to be. If I don't do this, I don't get to see my daughter. The police, the courts—they're breathing down my neck. This whole thing feels like a waste of time." He threw the words out like a challenge, daring anyone to try and change his mind.

No-one spoke for a few moments.

Alek's accented words were raw, unfiltered. "I'm Alek. My wife left. I didn't hit her, not physically. But I scared her. Smashed things. Yelled at her, made her feel crazy. She's gone now with my little boy. She won't even talk to me."

Mike, sitting beside Steve, looked at him for a second before speaking. "I'm Mike. Steve's a friend. I'm here to maybe learn something. I'm not exactly sure what's going to be happening here in this group."

Brendan, sitting with his arms crossed in a manner that matched Evan's, spoke up next, his voice was flat. "I'm Brendan. I'm not one of those guys, you know? I've made mistakes, yeah, but I'm not here to get preached at. I'm just here because I've got to try to do something different before I contact my Mrs again."

Scott nodded, acknowledging their words, but there was no room for games here. "Thank you, all of you. This isn't about making excuses or justifying anything. It's about looking at who you've been and deciding if that's the kind of man you want to be moving forward."

Scott pulled up the circle diagram showing power and control behaviours onto the projection screen. It wasn't pretty, but it was honest. The physical and sexual violence behaviours on the outer ring demonstrated links to the other forms of more subtle abuse like intimidation, coercion, and emotional abuse on the inner ring. It wasn't just theory. It was a pattern of lived experience seen in thousands of homes across the country every day.*

Steve looked shocked. "I don't need to see this. I don't abuse my wife." His tone was defensive, as though the mere suggestion was an insult to everything he believed about his role as a man.

Scott didn't back down. "It's not about whether you think you yell or not. It's about a need for control. Sometimes it can be subtle. We are here to help you consider your thinking patterns about relationships. Your thoughts contribute to the words you say, and the way you behave—these things shape everything. And that's what we're here to talk about."

Evan, always ready to challenge, threw his hands up. "So what? Now I'm a bad guy? This is all just ... blaming us, huh?"

Scott held his ground. "No one's blaming anyone, Evan. But if you want to get something out of this, you've got to be ready to think about what's really going on in your relationships. What is actually motivating you. If you want to stick your head in the sand, you might as well walk out the door."

Scott put a video up on the screen, signalled Dave over near the door to dim the lights and pressed play. A man started to talk, sharing his story. In the next ten minutes he outlined the grim but familiar story of growing up in a family that wasn't safe, not addressing any of the pain of his past, using emotional abuse to gain some control in his marriage, which then led to needing more control and physical violence. He finished up saying that he's done the work now to acknowledge the harm he's done, but it doesn't undo the past, it just gives him a chance at a different future.

When the video finished, Dave switched the lights back on.

There was silence in the room.

Alek sat quietly, almost like he was trying to disappear. When he finally spoke, his voice was soft, but it carried a weight that surprised everyone in the room. “I didn’t hit Miriam. But I wanted to scare her. I wanted to put her in her place. And now she’s gone. I don’t know what to do with that.”

Scott’s voice broke the stillness. “That’s where the work begins. Recognising that harm, even if it’s not physical, is still harm. And if you want to change, you’re going to have to own that.”

Scott wrapped up the session. “This isn’t about shame. It’s about taking responsibility. It’s about facing the reality of who you’ve been, so you can make a different choice. But that choice is yours. We’ll meet again next week. If you want to be here, we’ll do the work. If not ... that’s on you.”

- *The Power and Control Wheel* has been created by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (DAIP), Duluth, MN (Copies are available to download for the purpose of non-profit community education programs from www.theduluthmodel.org)

Reflection Questions

1. What different motivations for attending the group do you hear in these men and how might these motivations affect their willingness to change?
2. Why might some men want to scare their partner? Or ‘put them in their place’?
3. What needs or fears do men sometimes try to manage through being manipulative or controlling?
4. What gets in the way of some men pausing and reflecting before reacting with anger?

2.2 – MEN OWNING THEIR OWN MIRROR

Session Goal: To recognise how denial protects behaviour, and how ownership opens the door for change.

Extract from *Grace for the Broken* – Chapter 13

(Men's Behaviour Change Group)

The chairs were arranged in a loose circle again. There was no projection screen tonight, just the men, and another week's worth of unspoken stories.

Scott began writing two words on the whiteboard in firm strokes, DENIAL and OWNERSHIP. "Today we're talking about the difference between blowing off steam and actually looking at yourselves. If you minimise your actions in here, in a room where you're safe and there's no conflict unfolding, what do you think you're doing at home?"

Silence settled like a heavy blanket.

Evan scoffed. "Okay, but sometimes it is their fault. I mean if someone won't just shut up ..."

Scott held up a hand. "Let's try that again. Without the word 'their'."

Evan flushed. "What?"

"Say the sentence again," Scott said. "But don't blame someone else. Just describe what you did in that situation. Your action."

Evan frowned, his arms crossing tighter. "I ... reacted."

"How?"

"I... got angry. I yelled."

Scott nodded. "Better. Now, why did you yell?"

Evan opened his mouth to defend himself, then closed it again.

"I ... didn't want to feel like I was wrong," he muttered.

"There it is," Scott said softly. "That's the mirror."

Scott looked around the circle. "Denial is about protecting who you wish you were. But accountability? That's about looking at who you actually are."

Brendan exhaled sharply. "Fine. I make excuses. We all do. But if I didn't, I'd drown in guilt, man."

Scott nodded. "That's shame talking. And shame doesn't change behaviour—it just hides it. Accountability is different. Accountability says: I did this. And now I choose to do and be something else."

Alek spoke next, voice low. "I used to tell Miriam she was too sensitive. Every time she cried after I yelled at her or I'd broken something and cleaned it up, I'd say she was exaggerating ... or imagining things." His throat tightened. "I think I said it so often I started believing it myself."

Scott's tone softened. "That's exactly how denial works."

Alek nodded, eyes wet but steady. "I don't want to be that man anymore."

Then, unexpectedly, Steve cleared his throat. He looked down at his hands like the words were shaking themselves loose despite his grip.

"I—" His voice caught. He tried again. "I grew up in a house that was a mess. It was emotional chaos. You didn't know what version of my parents you'd get. Ever."

The men stilled. Even Evan looked up.

Steve continued slowly, almost painfully. "I thought ... if I stayed in control of my home, I'd never repeat that. If I didn't let anything come in that I hadn't approved of or decided on ... my home would be safe. My kids wouldn't see—" He broke off, blinking fast. "But I didn't realise that trying to control everything ... could maybe ... be its own kind of harm."

Scott let the words hang before speaking. "Steve ... that's real insight. Control isn't safety. It's the opposite. Safety comes from respect, boundaries, and accountability."

Brendan rubbed his face with both hands. "So, ... every time I feel angry and start blaming her, I'm supposed to just ... stop? What am I supposed to do instead?"

Scott smiled. Not kindly, but approvingly. "That's the right question."

He wrote on the whiteboard again.

*"**Blame** says - She made me. **Responsibility** says - I chose to do that."*

*"**Denial** says - It wasn't that bad. **Accountability** says - It hurt her, and I need to face that."*

*"**Shame** says - I'm a monster. **Responsibility** says - I can change my behaviour if I acknowledge what I've done and tell the truth about it."*

Scott scanned the circle. "Every single one of you came in here defending your story. Tonight, some of you started telling the truth instead. That is where change begins. Not in fixing your partner. Not in justifying your anger. But right here—owning your own mirror."

Reflection Questions

1. In this group session, what shifts do you notice in how the men talk about themselves and their behaviour?
2. How does making excuses protect men from having to face truth about themselves?
3. What do you imagine it would feel like to say, 'I chose to do this,' without blaming anyone else?
4. Which moment in this scene likely felt most confronting to these men? Why?

3.1 - THROUGH THEIR PARTNER'S EYES

Session Goal: To build empathy by seeing behaviour through a partner's experience and recognising the impact of fear.

Extract from *Grace for the Broken* – Chapter 16

(Men's Behaviour Change Group)

Scott looked around the group and cleared his throat. "Tonight's exercise is straightforward. But it's not easy. There's nowhere to hide. I asked each of you to write from your partner's perspective—one memory. A moment when they felt unsafe. The idea isn't shame. It's empathy. Emotional truth-telling."

A long silence followed.

Scott didn't flinch. "You're welcome to pass. But if you do read, speak slowly. Speak like it matters."

Evan shrugged. "I didn't write anything."

No one reacted. It was expected by now.

Brendan muttered, "I wrote something."

Scott nodded once. "Go ahead."

Brendan pulled out a crumpled sheet of paper. His voice was flat.

She says she was scared that night. That I came in too fast. I did bang the door. Yeah. But she was yelling too. Said things about my mother. I snapped. I punched the wall next to her. I didn't touch her. I never touched her.

His mouth tightened. He dropped the page on the floor.

Scott didn't evaluate or comment. "Thank you."

A stillness settled.

Then Alek shifted. He reached into his jacket pocket and unfolded a page with rough, square handwriting. His hands trembled slightly.

"I've mentioned before ... my partner's name is Miriam," he began, his accent deepening. "This is what I think she might have felt. That night. When I—"

He stopped, swallowed, then started reading.

You were yelling again. I could smell the vodka. Our son was behind me, crying, but you didn't stop. You said I was useless. That I made you angry. That I pushed your buttons. I tried to leave the room, but you blocked the door. Then you grabbed the chair and threw it

at the wall. Pieces splintered. I froze. You saw fear in my eyes—and that's when you finally left.

Alek paused. His jaw clenched hard.

"I never hit her," he said quietly. "But I see now ... that doesn't mean she wasn't harmed."

Scott nodded slowly. "That's an important truth."

"I sounded like my father," Alek added. "That night. That voice ... I didn't know it was inside me."

The silence wasn't uncomfortable now. It was respectful. Steve looked down. Evan scratched his jaw but said nothing.

Police Officer Dave, who had been sitting quietly in the corner, finally spoke. His voice was low.

"It takes guts to speak honestly like that."

Alek didn't lift his head. "I don't want my son remembering me for fear. I want him to remember a man who changed."

Scott leaned forward. "You've taken the first real step. Ownership."

Reflection Questions

1. Why is it hard for men who are abusive to put themselves in the shoes of their partner?
2. How could stopping to consider a partner's fear or feelings change a man's choices in moments of anger?
3. If you are a parent, how do you want your children to remember you? How does the way you treat your partner support that?
4. What does owning harmful behaviour require a man to give up?

3.2 - LISTENING TO TRUTH

Session Goal: To listen to survivor truth without defensiveness and understand why accountability matters for safety.

Extract from *Grace for the Broken* – Chapter 20

(Men's Behaviour Change Group)

Scott looked around the the room was quiet. The group atmosphere felt heavier than usual.

Scott's voice cut softly through the silence. "As I mentioned to you this evening when we started, tonight we're going to hear from a woman who is a survivor. Listen carefully—really listen. Imagine you are hearing this in person. This could be your partner speaking."

A video began to play on the screen in front of them. The woman was a silhouette, her voice was steady, but full of honest pain.

"I remember the first time I realised fear had become normal in my home.

Not anger—fear.

My heart started racing whenever he raised his voice. Our five year old son was watching, learning from my silence.

I remember the first time he threw something at me. A plate. It shattered against the wall, just missing me. My son was there, crying, and I held him close, whispering that it was okay, even though it wasn't.

Then over time, the physical violence increased. The kind that makes your heart pound not because of pain, but because of fear. Fear that the next time will be worse. That your child will see you hurt and think that this is how love looks.

I've had bruises that I hid with long sleeves. I've had doors slammed in my face, walls kicked, furniture broken ... just because I dared to speak, to exist.

Every time I flinched, every time I ducked, every time I held my son close to protect him, I felt the weight of it—the control, the anger, the fear.

I stayed because I hoped he would change. Because I wanted my son to have a father. But I was slowly learning that hope wasn't enough.

There was no hope.

I was silenced in my own home, my life controlled by someone I once trusted. And even when I left, the fear didn't just disappear. We carry it still, in quiet moments, in sudden memories, in the instinct to flinch at raised voices.

Leaving was terrifying. We left with nothing but a small bag and a hope that we could be safe. But even now, sometimes, I wake up expecting him to be there, expecting that rage.

The scars are not just on my skin—they're in my mind, in my son's eyes, in every quiet moment that we hear an angry or sudden sound."

Evan jumped up, knocking his chair to the ground. "I'm not staying to listen to anymore of this crap!"

Scott stopped the video.

Evan started striding towards the door.

Scott spoke to his retreating back. "If you leave now Evan, it will be very hard to come back."

Evan turned as he reached the door. "I'm finished. I can't carry anymore guilt."

Scott spoke to the group. "That sounded like Evan's shame speaking. Not his guilt.

Guilt shows you where you've harmed others, giving you an opportunity to change.

Shame just tells you that you are bad. It condemns you. Leaving you with no hope."

Scott took a deep breath and exhaled.

"I think it would show respect to listen to the end of this video."

All heads looked up at the screen again.

"I agreed to be recorded sharing this because change matters.

Because what you choose to do and be matters.

Because men like you have a choice—to be better, to change, to be healthy in relationships, or to continue the cycle of control, abuse and violence.

Love is not control. Love is not fear. Love is showing respect and acknowledging that your partner and your children are just as valuable and important as you.

Showing respect is believing that they they have a right to feel safe in their own home.

I hope you choose to understand this before it's too late."

The recording ended.

Silence fell like a weight.

Every man left in the circle seemed to be holding his own breath.

Then, Brendan exhaled, running a hand down his face. "I couldn't have watched much more of that ... I thought I understood fear. But hearing her talk about her ... and her son—it's not just words on paper. I've made people walk on eggshells. It makes you feel powerful. But, I see it now, like I never really did before. It's ugly. It's behaving like a monster."

Reflection Questions

1. What part of this survivor's story affected you most in 'listening' to it?
2. How does the difference between guilt and shame show up in the men's reactions during this session?
3. What do you think Evan was trying to escape by leaving — and what would staying have required of him?
4. What are some ways these men could begin taking responsibility for the harm they've caused?

4.1 – WOMEN WHO HARM

Session Goal: To understand that women can harm others in relationships too. This happens primarily through the use of harsh or degrading words. Appropriate boundaries, not intimidation or control, are the most effective way of addressing women who are harmful.

Extract from *Grace for the Broken* – Chapter 14

Ruby's mother Maureen had been coming into the café more frequently, asking if she could see baby Sam. Ruby had initially refused, reminding her Mum that Sam wouldn't even be here if she'd followed Maureen's insistence on ending the pregnancy. However, Ruby as a nineteen year old realised she needed to offer her Mum the opportunity to demonstrate if she had changed. If she could become someone who was safe.

Ruby had arranged to meet her on a Monday morning. It was now a few minutes after their designated meeting time and she looked up to see Maureen walking fast towards them, jaw set. She was dressed in skinny jeans, with heeled boots, hair newly dyed blue.

"Well," she said, stopping beside the pram. "There he is."

She leaned in, assessing Sam like a purchase.

"He's bigger than I expected."

"He's doing really well," Ruby said.

"Must be nice." Maureen moved around behind the pram and began pushing it without asking. "A boss who pays you and plays grandmother too."

Ruby let it go. For now.

They reached the seating area and Sam began to fuss. Ruby lifted him into the sling, settling him against her chest.

Maureen frowned. "Babies become needy if you hold them."

"He settles like this."

"Hm." Maureen lit a cigarette. "You always did need a lot of reassurance."

Ruby shifted away so the smoke wouldn't reach Sam.

Maureen talked about her pub shifts for a while, then stopped, watching Ruby rock Sam gently.

"You look restless, Rubes. Babies feel that." She exhaled smoke. "They need calm."

"I am calm."

Maureen clicked her tongue. "You're still a teenager, Rubes. You didn't even finish school. How you could possibly know what a baby needs?"

Something settled in Ruby then—solid, immovable.

"I need you to stop speaking to me like that."

Maureen blinked. "Like what?"

"I didn't come here to be criticised." Ruby's voice stayed level. "And I won't let my son grow up hearing it."

Maureen scoffed. "I can't even talk to you anymore without it turning into something."

"We won't be spending time together again unless you start seeing a counsellor," Ruby said. "And doing the work to change how you speak to me."

Maureen laughed, sharp and disbelieving. "You're joking."

Ruby had never stood up to her mother like this. But she realised that Sam's wellbeing was worth fighting for. He deserved better than she'd had.

"I'm not." Ruby was firm.

"So now I'm not good enough to see my own grandson?" Maureen stubbed out her cigarette.

"I'm happy for you to have a role in his life," Ruby said. "But only if you're willing to learn how to be safe. Don't come to see us again until you've started changing."

Maureen stared at her, then reached for her bag.

"You've changed."

Ruby nodded. "I know."

Without saying anything else to Maureen she turned the pram and walked away.

She didn't need permission to leave. A clear line had been drawn in the sand. Whether she saw her mother again was now up to her.

Reflection Questions

1. This scene is about a daughter Ruby who starts standing up to her mother because she has decided she wants to be treated with respect. Why do people in relationships sometimes let disrespect continue?
2. If an adult grew up as a child in a household where disrespect was modelled by one or both parents, what impact might this have on their future relationships?
3. What are some healthy ways that men can establish boundaries if they are being disrespected by their wife or partner?
4. When do healthy boundaries overstep the mark and slip into more dangerous attitudes and behaviour about power and control?

4.2 – STEPPING UP TO HELP

Session Goal: To encourage men to stand up in small ways that matter to support women who are being harmed and to consider showing respect to partners instead of needing control.

Extract from *Grace for the Broken* – Chapter 32

The campsite was set beside a slow-moving river, red dirt packed hard beneath boots and folding chairs. Swags lay unrolled under gum trees. A small fire crackled at the centre of their circle.

Steve and Mike had been getting together with these men camping once a year for the past decade. Brad, Luke and Nate. They'd been groomsmen at each other's weddings.

Amazingly, they were all still married.

Brad broke the silence first. "So. This group you guys did. What actually changes?"

Steve stared into the fire before answering.

"It's not anger management," he said. "That's what I thought it would be. It's about control. The need for it. The ways we justify it."

Luke shifted uncomfortably. "You mean like yelling?"

"Sometimes," Mike replied. "But also interrupting. Making decisions without asking. Dismissing what your wife says. Acting like helping the family around the home is optional."

Brad frowned. "So what do you actually do now that's different?"

Mike took a breath. "I listen longer. I don't jump in to 'correct' Suzanne with my opinion. I realise she might have wisdom and perspectives I don't have. And when I stuff up, I apologise. Properly. No 'but' justifications at the end."

Steve nodded. "I stopped assuming leadership meant being in charge. Turns out it means being accountable."

Luke let out a quiet laugh. "Sounds like you've gone soft."

Steve smiled slightly. "That's what I was afraid of. But I discovered it's actually harder to sit with your own behaviour and its impact than it is to bark orders or sit like a king or your assumed throne."

Nate glanced between them. "If you see a mate being a jerk to his wife? What then?"

Mike answered this time.

"You don't humiliate him. You pull him aside. You say, 'Hey, that didn't sit right.' You ask questions. You make it uncomfortable enough that he has to think."

"And if he tells you to get stuffed?" Brad asked.

"Then at least he knows someone saw it," Steve said. "Silence is agreement."

The river moved steadily behind them.

Luke stared into the flames. "My old man ruled our house. No one questioned him."

Steve's voice was steady. "Mine too."

Luke was curious. "And?"

"And I'm trying to give my daughter something different."

No one rushed to fill the silence after that.

The fire burned lower. The sky shifted from deep blue to black, scattered with stars.

Brad finally spoke, quieter now. "So you reckon men can actually change?"

Mike looked at Steve before answering.

"Yes," he said. "But not because someone makes them. Because they decide being in control isn't worth losing everyone."

Reflection Questions

1. Why do you think that Luke wanted to suggest that Steve and Mike 'had gone soft'?
2. How do you feel about respectfully calling someone out on being controlling or disrespectful to his partner or another woman if you see this?
3. How common do you think it is for men in circles around you to be in relationships that model—equally sharing decisions, listening to their partner's thoughts and ideas, and always speaking to them respectfully?
4. How have your views on the problem of domestic violence in our society changed as a result of these sessions?
5. What is one small step you could take this week towards helping other men become safe, and who could you tell about this to keep you accountable?

Ways for Men to Encourage Safer Relationships

(Facilitator Note: These practical ways to help can be talked through in the final session and distributed as a takeaway resource.)

1. Peer Accountability and Mentoring

- Small accountability circles: Men can meet regularly to discuss challenges, attitudes, and behaviours, holding one another accountable in a safe, structured way.
- Mentorship: Older or more mature men can mentor younger men in modelling respectful relationships, challenging harmful assumptions about masculinity or dominance.
- Accountability partners: Encourage men to have one trusted peer they can text or call when facing situations where anger, control, or entitlement might surface.

2. Modelling Respect in Daily Life

- Domestic responsibility: Show through action, not words, that household and emotional labour is shared equally with partners.
- Active listening: Men can practice really hearing women in workplaces, churches, and homes, and demonstrating that their voices are valued.
- Public affirmation: Encourage men to speak positively about the women in their lives—at work, in church, and in community spaces.

3. Speaking Up Against Harmful Behaviour

- Interrupting disrespect: Training men to notice and gently, firmly call out sexist jokes, controlling language, or dismissive attitudes among peers.
- Defusing situations: Helping men intervene safely if another man is showing aggressive, controlling, or coercive behaviour toward a woman.
- Workplace: If a colleague makes a woman uncomfortable, pull them aside privately: ‘Mate, that wasn’t okay – how would you want someone speaking to your daughter?’

4. Engaging with Wider Community Structures

- Community leadership and programs: Encourage men to advocate for policies and practices in community, church or social groups that give women a voice, and respect women's contributions, rather than reinforce hierarchy or silence.
- Supporting local organisations: Partner with domestic violence services, shelters, and educational programs to volunteer, fundraise, or speak about healthy masculinity.
- Workplace culture: Men can promote equitable leadership when a woman has equal skills and respect in professional settings, mentoring male colleagues to understand power dynamics.

5. Education and Self-Reflection

- Learning the signs of abuse and coercive control: Men can be trained to recognise subtle patterns and respond safely.
- Regular reflection practices: Journaling, or small-group discussion to explore attitudes, impulses, and learned behaviours.
- Reading or training together: Books, videos, and programs that explore healthy masculinity, consent, and relational ethics.

6. Amplifying Women's Voices

- Invite women into conversation: Men can create space for women to have a voice in discussions on safety, equality, and respect.
- Share the stage: In community talks or church discussions, co-present with women and make sure their insights are central, not tokenised.
- Defer when appropriate: Recognise when listening and supporting is more effective than leading—sometimes being “part of the solution” means stepping back and amplifying others.

7. Modelling Healthy Relationships for the Next Generation

- Parenting with respect: Show children that power isn't the goal; collaboration and mutual respect are.
- Mentoring boys: Encourage boys to reject controlling or disrespectful behaviour as part of their definition of masculinity.
- Storytelling: Share real examples of change to show young men that accountability and growth are valued and possible.