THAT'S MY
TEENAGE
SON

how MOMS can influence their
BOYS to become good MEN

By Rick Johnson

EIGHT-WEEK LEADER'S GUIDE
An Eight-Week Leader’s Guide

Thank you for volunteering to lead a study of That’s My Teenage Son. You have made a big step toward changing the lives of possibly hundreds of people. The goal of this study is to help women raise their teenage boys to become men of character. Sons will grow up to become men no matter what you do or don’t do, but the world needs good men. That takes intentionality, understanding, and hard work.

Both single and married mothers will discover vital information in this study that will equip them to mother their teen boys to the best of their abilities. I encourage you to invite mothers in any situation to attend, and to remember that moms can support each other as they discover how to apply the principles of this study.

I am honored that you chose my book to use for your group. Let’s dig in!
Preparation

**Begin with Prayer**
Prayer is your most powerful tool—so make it a point to pray before you form a group, before each meeting convenes, and during the week for each of the participants.

**Develop Relationships**
Next, remember to show love to each of your group members. I suggest contacting each woman in the group at least twice during the study to encourage and love on them. You can do this by telephone, by writing a note or email, or in person. Consider offering refreshments at your meetings and planning a family potluck or girls’ night out at the end of the study.

**Have a Humble and Caring Attitude**
When someone answers a question, make an encouraging or affirming comment. Instead of using the word “should,” try “I would like to encourage you to do this . . .” Discussion during this study may cause strong emotions to surface, so keep plenty of tissues available as well as a good supply of compassion. *Finally, have positive expectations that everyone in the group will be significantly impacted by what they experience through this study.*
GROUP RULES: Creating a Safe Environment

Confidentiality
Confidentiality is the most important rule. Shared personal information should not be taken outside the group, even under the pretext of asking someone outside the group to pray for group members. Married group members should not share with their spouse what others have said.

Group Member Responsibilities
Everyone in the group must read the designated chapters each week. Remind group members that they will get out of the study only what they put into it. Additionally, each member should commit to attend at least three-quarters of the meetings. Some moms may need childcare, and you might consider providing this as a service through your church or consider hiring a few teenage girls to provide childcare for your group each week.

Group Dynamics
Since your meetings will be no more than two hours in length, consider keeping the group size small. I suggest no more than five to seven women per group. This leaves enough time for everyone to express something they would like to discuss from the reading. As leader, one of your challenges will be to include everyone in the discussion and not let one specific individual dominate.

Finally, reach an agreement with group members that the purpose of this study is not to “fix” anyone or to serve as a counseling service. Keep advice general and refrain from giving advice to specific individuals. As you form your group, pray with others from your faith community about inviting friends or neighbors of all faiths, beliefs, and cultures. This group will be a safe place for all to learn more about raising their teenage boys to become good men!
Group Meetings

The First Meeting
The first meeting serves as a “get acquainted” meeting. Make sure each group member has the book prior to the meeting so they can read the introduction and chapter 1. Provide refreshments, and ask each mom to share as much about herself as she is comfortable with. Important information to know will include: how many children (ages and genders), marital status, family background, and occupation. This also provides information for members to use to pray for each other over the course of the study.

I also encourage you to read the rules of the group aloud at the beginning of the first meeting, and then touch on them briefly throughout the duration of the study. For instance, you may want to remind the group several times that information shared during meetings is confidential.

General Meetings
Begin each meeting with a short prayer, and ask a different member to lead the prayer each week. (If they say “no thanks,” say OK and lead the prayer yourself.) At the end of each meeting, I encourage you to pray as a group over one individual member. I have yet to find anyone, even non-Christians, who objected to being prayed for. I allow non-Christians to abstain from participating in the group prayer if they so choose, but again, I have not yet found anyone who did. Nothing brings people together faster than praying together.

As you begin your discussion time, begin by asking everyone what points in the book stood out for them and why. After giving each person a chance to respond, proceed by reading and allowing discussion of each of the questions indicated for your current week. One approach is to have a different mom read each question aloud, and then give each woman an opportunity to answer. As a leader, feel free to expound on questions, to skip a question in order to spend more time on another one, or to encourage others to ask questions not listed in the book. The only bad question is one not asked.
Frequently Asked Questions

I have found that most moms’ questions revolve around sex and the way males think about it. It may be helpful to invite a trustworthy male guest to address this issue during the discussion of chapter 8: “Developing a Healthy Sexuality.” The following questions are frequently asked by moms at my parenting seminars. I’ve also listed some responses for your consideration.

1. How can I encourage my son to have better personal hygiene habits?
Early in puberty many boys do not recognize their need for heightened personal hygiene in response to changes in their body. Often explaining these changes is enough to help. Additionally, later in puberty most boys start spending more time in the shower than necessary, seeking personal privacy. That helps with hygiene, but leads to question 3.

2. How should I talk with my teenage son about sex?
Discuss issues in a matter-of-fact tone—try your best not to be embarrassed. Find resources (books, videos, even movie scenes) to help stimulate conversations. Males appreciate bottom-line information, not drawn-out emotional discussions. Tell him the facts openly, even if it’s uncomfortable.

3. What is the proper response if/when I discover my son is masturbating?
Do not overreact emotionally. Let him know this is normal but a private issue. He’ll probably be more embarrassed than you. A trusted male should discuss with him the potential negative side effects of overindulgence in this area.

4. Since it is so destructive and prevalent, how can I safeguard my son from viewing pornography?
Make this one of your “line in the sand” battles. Again, do not overreact emotionally but find multiple resources to help him understand the devastation this causes. Protect your home with cable parental controls, computer filter software, and accountability on personal and family computers. Talk about this issue frequently and make sure he understands your convictions and the danger.
5. Why is my son so angry?
Hormonal changes in puberty—especially testosterone surges—can cause aggressive or moody behavior. Males also tend to cover fear, vulnerability, and pain with a more “manly” emotion: anger. Help him understand the changes taking place in his body and his emotions so he can learn control. A male counselor may be helpful.

6. Where can I find positive male role models for my son?
His father is best—even if in your opinion he is not. Supplement that with healthy role models such as grandfathers or uncles, male teachers or coaches, Boy Scout leaders, men in church, mentoring programs, even neighbors. Also, point out positive or negative male behavior in things like books and movies so he can compare the differences.

The following is a weekly outline for this study group.
**Eight-Week Study Outline**

**Week 1:**  
**Group Introductions, Review Group Rules, Group Prayer, Introduction, and Chapter 1**  
*Icebreaker questions:* Why did you decide to join the group? What do you hope to learn from this study? Fill in the blank, starting with the leader: I feel __________ about beginning this study. [examples: nervous, excited, hopeful, overwhelmed, etc.]

**Week 2:**  
**Chapter 2 & Chapter 3**  
*Icebreaker question:* What is the one thing that drives you crazy about your son?  
*Answer questions at the end of chapters 1 and 2.*

**Week 3:**  
**Chapter 4 & Chapter 5**  
*Icebreaker question:* In what ways do moms tend to stifle their son’s manhood?  
*Answer questions at the end of chapters 3 and 4.*

**Week 4:**  
**Chapter 6 & Chapter 7**  
*Icebreaker question:* What’s the best way you’ve found to communicate with males?  
*Answer questions at the end of chapters 5 and 6.*

**Week 5:**  
**Chapter 8 & Chapter 9**  
*Icebreaker question:* How do you feel about Rick’s statement: “adolescence is a dangerous time for boys” (p. 125)?  
*Answer questions at the end of chapters 7 and 8.*
**Week 6:**
**Chapter 10 & Chapter 11**
**Icebreaker Question:** Has praying for your son made a positive difference in his life?
If so, how?

*Answer questions at the end of chapters 9 and 10.*

**Week 7:**
**Chapter 12 & Chapter 13**
**Icebreaker Activity:** Have two creative group members role-play a conversation between mom and son before he goes out on a date, encouraging him with what young women need and want in a man (examples: gentleness, chivalry, strength).

*Answer questions at the end of chapters 11, 12, and 13.*

**Week 8:**
**Celebration: Mother/Son Group Date Night!**
Show your sons how to treat a lady while enjoying this wrap-up to your group. Use your creativity to plan a potluck or restaurant meal and/or an enjoyable activity together.

May God bless you and your families!

This leaders' guide courtesy of Rick Johnson, author of *That's My Teenage Son: How Moms Can Influence Their Boys to Become Good Men* (Revell, 2011).
Visit Rick's Better Dads ministry website at **http://www.betterdads.net**. Sign up to receive encouraging and inspirational newsletters at rick@betterdads.net.