Thank you for volunteering to lead a study of That's My 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 boys to become men of character. Sons will grow up to become men regardless of what mothers do or don’t do, but the world needs good men. That takes intentionality, understanding, and hard work.

Both single mothers and married mothers will discover vital information in this study that will equip them to mother their boys to the best of their abilities. I would 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 study 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 your group members. I suggest contacting each woman in the group at least twice during the study to encourage and love them. You can do this by telephone, by email, or in person. Take advantage of the extra time in the first and last weeks to build relationships; you should also consider having a family potluck or girls’ night out at the end of the study.
**Have a humble and nurturing attitude.** One word I try to avoid when leading groups is “should.” I try to use phrases that are less threatening, such as, “I would like to encourage you to do this.”

When women answer questions or make comments, try to encourage, affirm, and thank them. Discussion during this study may cause strong emotions to surface, so keep plenty of tissue available as well as a good supply of compassion. If you are open, other group members will also be willing to be more vulnerable.

**GROUP RULES: CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

1. **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 other group members have said.

2. **Group Member Responsibilities**

Everyone in the group must read the designated chapter and answer the chapter-end questions each week. Remind group members that they will get out of the study only what they put into it. In addition, each member should commit to attending 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 each week.

3. **Group Dynamics**

Since your meetings will be no more than two hours in length, consider keeping the group size to a minimum. I suggest no more than five to seven women. This leaves enough time for everyone to express everything they need to discuss from the readings. As leader, one of your challenges will be to not let one specific individual dominate the discussion and to make sure that everyone is included. Finally, reach an agreement with group members that the purpose of the study is not to “fix” anyone or to serve as a counseling service. Keep advice general and refrain from giving advice to specific individuals.

**GROUP MEETINGS**

**The First Meeting:**

The first meeting serves as a “get acquainted” meeting. Pass out copies of That’s My Son to each member. Provide refreshments and ask each mom to share as much about herself as she is comfortable. 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 weekly program.

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 the 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. 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 over. 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 is more intimate or brings people together faster than praying together.

Each week, begin by asking everyone what point in the book stood out for them and why. After giving each person a chance to respond, proceed by reading and answering each of the chapter-end questions one at a time. One approach is to have a different mom read each question aloud, and then give each woman an opportunity to answer. As leader, feel free to expound on questions or encourage others to ask questions not listed in the book. The only bad question is one not asked.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Over the years, the same questions come up at nearly every seminar I present. Most of these questions revolve around sex and the way males think about it. It may be helpful to invite a trustworthy male guest speaker to address this issue during the chapter discussion of “Boys and Sex.” The following questions are frequently asked by moms at the Courageous Moms—Raising Boys to Become Good Men seminars. I’ve also listed in parenthesis some typical responses, which I give for your consideration.

1. When [and how] should I start talking about sex with my son? (As early as possible, and often—age appropriately.)

2. When will my son start masturbating? (Sooner than you want to hear—many times by nine or ten years old. Talk to him or have a trusted male role model talk to him about it before he starts.)

3. At what age should I stop letting him sleep with me or take showers with me? (I have had many moms say they still shower or sleep with their nine- or ten-year-old son and feel there is nothing wrong with it. I ask them if it would be appropriate for their husband to shower with their ten-year-old daughter. Usually that’s enough to get my point across. I think around five years of age is a good time to break that habit.)

4. Why is my son so angry? (Your son may have good reasons for being angry. Understand that males often use anger to mask other, more humiliating emotions like fear and vulnerability. Help him understand what he really feels and why.)

5. Since it is so destructive, how can I keep him from viewing pornography? (This is extremely difficult, but you are the most influential female in his life. Make sure he consistently knows how you feel about pornography and that it is degrading and disrespectful to all women.)

6. Where can I find positive male role models for my son? (Be intentional about it. There are good men out there, but they will not get involved without your prompting.)
8 WEEK STUDY OUTLINE

WEEK 1:  Group Introductions, Review Group Rules, Group Prayer

Ice-breaker question:
Why are you here tonight? What do you hope to accomplish through this study?

WEEK 2:  Introduction, Chapter 1, and Chapter 2

Ice-breaker question:
What is the one thing that drives you crazy about your son?
Answer questions at the ends of chapters 1 and 2.

WEEK 3:  Chapter 3 and Chapter 4

Ice-breaker question:
Are moms over-protective of boys? In what ways?
Answer questions at the ends of chapters 3 and 4.

WEEK 4:  Chapter 5 and Chapter 6

Ice-breaker question:
What's the one best way you’ve found to communicate with males?
Answer questions at the ends of chapters 5 and 6.

WEEK 5:  Chapter 7 and Chapter 8

Ice-breaker question:
What's the one character trait you’d like your son to be known for? How can you instill that trait in him?
Answer questions at the ends of chapters 7 and 8.

WEEK 6:  Chapter 9

Ice-breaker question:
Do you believe that boys must have men in their lives to develop a healthy masculinity? Why or why not?
Answer questions at the end of chapter 9.

WEEK 7:  Chapter 10

End of meeting question:
What is the most important thing you’ve learned from this study?
Now review answers from Week 1 regarding what participants hoped to accomplish through this study. Were they successful?

WEEK 8:  Celebration: Family Potluck or Girls’ Night Out!

MAY GOD BLESS YOU AND YOUR FAMILIES!

This Leaders’ Guide courtesy of Rick Johnson, author of That’s My Son—How Moms Can Influence Boys to Become Men of Character, Revell Publishing.

Visit Rick’s Better Dads ministry website at www.betterdads.net. Sign up to receive encouraging and inspirational newsletters at rick@betterdads.net.