

# 3 THINGS

I WISH I KNEW BEFORE

BECOMING A MOM OF BOYS



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# LETTER FROM LISA & HAVILAH

*“Our goal is to raise children who are independent of us and dependent on God”*

Hi girls, Lisa & Havilah here,

We just want to say, welcome! And we are SO excited that you are interested in joining us for this series on Moms of Men.

This free eBook is our way of giving you a taster and an overview of what you will experience and get when you sign up to track with us through twelve short videos using the workbook. We've picked three subjects to write about here, so think of it as peek through the fence at the party next door. You get to see three of the presents opened before the party starts! It's the three things we perhaps wish we had heard about right at the beginning of our parenting.

Most of you will know that this journey started by us posting a picture of the two of us together and asking if any moms of boys had questions.

Well, then we knew we had to get together for a mommy marathon day! So we put our mom t-shirts on, poured some coffee and got talking! The result? A whole series of video 'chats' where we pour out our lives for you, as moms of boys, in front of a camera.

As two women who both have four boys, we have lots to share with you! And our passion and desire are that you laugh and cry as we open up our lives to you and even that you end up jumping up and down in your seat, wishing you could call us to say, 'Me too! Me too!' We hope you will feel our passion, our honesty, our vulnerability and openness and our invitation. If you were with us in the kitchen (we wish we could fit you all in!), then know that we would be exactly the same with you all.

I (Havilah) have four boys aged 11, 9, 6 and 5 years and I (Lisa) have four men aged 31,28, 25 and 23 years. So, you get the benefit and the wisdom of hearing from one of us who is still in the middle of raising boys to men and the other one who has raised her men, and is now enjoying grandchildren!

Our heart in pulling this together is that we want you to feel released to be a mom the way that God has created *you* to be. We know, from having looked through all of your questions that you have more answers inside of you than you know, you just need permission and confidence to follow through on them. Our desire is also that by listening to us laugh with each other and tell stories of raising our boys, it will give you hope and help you to see that you are normal and doing ok!

We have both learned so much and made mistakes along the way. The good news is you don't have to make the same mistakes we did, in the same way. That's why we're here, and that's why we put this series together. We want to pour our strength and experience into you.

The Bible strongly urges that we, as older women, are to teach the younger women and that is our biggest passion in life (apart from our families!). We want with all our hearts for you to grasp hold of the fact that your calling as a mother is the most important one for you in this season. You are training a generation of men to carry God to the world and to walk in signs, wonders, and miracles. It's mini-church in your front room!

*We believe in you, we're praying for you and once you've read this little eBook we SO hope to have you with us for the full series!*

*LISA & HAVILAH*

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# NOT GOOD ENOUGH

*“Stop trying to parent in your own strength.”*

*Let's be real, don't we all feel this so much of the time as moms?!*

I (Lisa) used to have a list of shoulds and shouldn'ts about parenting. I was determined to get it right and do an amazing (read 'perfect!') job. Well guess what, every night I went to bed feeling like a complete failure. It was impossible!

We are all plagued by a sense that we are doing a terrible job, and it's such a painful and uncomfortable journey. We put enormous pressure on ourselves to be super-moms and to be cheerful, available and energetic all the time, and we feel guilty when we're not. We fear that our kids are being damaged by us and we feel shame when we imagine anyone seeing into our home. We constantly compare ourselves with the yummy moms at the school yard and are convinced that we must be the worst moms ever! Have you ever thought that those moms are most likely

plagued with the same nagging emotions?

We've both been there. The inner self-critic (along with the enemy) has had a field day with us at times. Fear, guilt, and shame hung around us as if they were friends but left us feeling wretched. We felt tired, overwhelmed, alone and condemned, so how did we survive and how are we surviving now?

Well, we'd love to share a few insights, tips and encouragements with you here. Just some of the things that we have realized are essential to keeping yourself alive and in one piece!

The first and most important thing to say is, 'You are NEVER alone, and you ARE enough!' God has chosen you and only you, to be a mom to your boys. Therefore you are anointed for the role. That leads to the second most important thing to say, and that is, 'Stop trying to parent in your own strength. It's exhausting!'

Connection with your Heavenly Father is honestly and genuinely the only way to survive. He alone has the wisdom, resources, love, compassion,



encouragement and championing that you need. We're not talking about coming to Him on behalf of your kids - that comes later. We are talking about you pouring out your heart to Him and simply being held, comforted and affirmed. Teach yourself to hear His, 'Well done!' and celebrate small victories and successes. Let go of perfection and give yourself permission to embrace 'good enough.' Every parent will leave gaps in their parenting; we are only human after all. God covers those gaps.

Don't be like me (Lisa) and go to bed feeling a failure and agreeing with the enemy as he picks apart everything you tried to do in the day and accuses you. Learn what it looks like for you, to process your emotions with your Father every day. Be kind, compassionate and non-judgmental to yourself; you're on a journey. He never ever accuses. He never ever condemns. Mostly He is celebrating you and championing your mom-skills. If you do get something wrong or yell, Holy Spirit is your gentle conviction, and with His kindness, He will lead you to say sorry and let it go.

*All moms struggle and we mean ALL moms. You may well reach breaking point. You might have more than one meltdown. It's ok. It's normal!*

You have been invited into an incredible journey; to raise boys to men. And alongside that, you are still on your own journey of growing and changing. You are also a wife, a friend, so all in all, you are doing an amazing job.

Check in with your Father about the season you are in and ask Him what He has to say about it. It is more than likely you require way more from yourself than He is. He might just say, 'Try not to yell today' and you might get to the end of the day feeling like you messed up a bunch of other stuff, but you managed not to yell. See God doing His happy dance as He celebrates the victory of the day!

Lastly, it can feel like you are either losing your life to the kids (is it really all about them?) or you can feel like you are losing your kids to your life (you're traveling or working, and you don't want to/can't stop). There is a balance. We have learned to engage the boys in family life. Everyone is a member of the family, so everyone gets to help around the house, and everyone gets to play, but we'll talk more about that in the next section.



# CULTURE & CORE VALUES

*“Devotion to God is not a formal meeting  
but a continual organic experience”*

Knowing what your core values are as a family and letting those values and your beliefs shape the culture in your house is huge! We cannot emphasize enough how much this will help you when it comes to disciplining and setting boundaries. Both become clearer to set and carry out if the whole family have heard and understood the ‘why’ and are connected and aligned to your heart.

The Bible tells us it's our job to train our children in the way they should go and that if we do, it will lead to life. Therefore, we do not want to create a culture of obedience that comes from, ‘Because I told you to.’ We want to be creating a culture of obedience out of our children catching our core values, owning them and then obeying out of love and honor.

As the mom, together with your husband (if you have one), you get to set the culture by demonstrating the core values. The way you speak, the

language you use, and the way you behave (e.g. the way you treat your husband) all go a long way to influencing your boys' understanding of the core values that you live by and are attempting to teach them.

For example, telling the truth and apologizing to them when you get things wrong, builds trust. It models openness and authenticity. They get to see that making mistakes is ok and that when they do, there is a way through it that maintains heart connection.

So, here's an example from me (Lisa). I reacted to a situation one day and yelled and grabbed one of my sons. I knew it was wrong and wanted to apologize. It went something like, 'When I grabbed you just now and yelled, that wasn't discipline, that was mommy reacting. And when mommy reacts, instead of disciplining, God disciplines her. So mommy and God have had a chat, and I need to say sorry and ask your forgiveness.'

We've both got many more stories to tell of our mistakes and what core values we currently have or had. There are too many to include in this taster eBook, but here are just a few to get you thinking about what core values you might want to incorporate into your family if you haven't already:

## FAMILY CORE VALUES

- *Devotion to God is not a formal meeting but a continual organic experience*
- *Dinner is a priority, and we all sit down around the dinner table*
- *There is open discussion at the table and permission to ask anything about anything*
- *We say sorry when we get something wrong, even if we are the adult (or especially if we are the adult!)*

Boundaries come out of the core values that you have set. For example, the core value of dinner time being a family priority will have an impact on what time your boys come in from playing outside or stop watching TV, etc. It may also affect how often they are allowed out to have dinner at their friend's' house. We hope you get the gist, **sign up to hear more!**

Discipline! Sometimes as moms this can make us a bit squeamish. Here's one of my (Havilah's) examples: I'm driving my boys home, and one of them plays up, disobeys me. I get super annoyed, and I tell him that when we get home, we are going to have a serious talk. On the way home they all get happy and by the time we've got indoors I'm willing to forget what's happened and say, 'I'll just let it go. I don't want to upset him. He's adorable!' (I know, help me Jesus!) DON'T do that. It is so important that we are consistent and that we follow through on what we said we would do.

Another thing we've learned about discipline; let the dads do it their way. They are men talking to boys, and there will be a difference to how they discipline (in line with your core values of course). We both laughed our way through some of the videos, telling stories about how we tried to

intervene or prevent our husbands from disciplining the boys. One time when my (Lisa) husband was in the laundry room with one of my sons about to discipline him, and I could hear my son crying, I was ready to break the door down! I had changed my mind and wanted to rescue him and tell his dad he didn't need discipline after all! My husband said, 'I haven't even done anything yet!'

I (Havilah) have learned I have to leave the room and leave my husband to it. Otherwise, I'm probably going to start arguing the case for no discipline - I just want to hug my cute son! (Never mind that 15 minutes earlier I'd wanted to strangle him!)

We've learned the hard way that if you don't follow through, the boys end up not believing you and sometimes even laughing! We sure don't want that to happen to you!

Always remember that discipline is a consequence of your child's choice. If you are communicating that to them up front (in your core values) and they know what they have done is wrong, it's their consequence to bear.

*OK, that's enough for now. Come and join in the laughter online if you want to hear more!*

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MOMS *of* MEN  
THE NAKED TRUTH OF RAISING BOYS







# BOYS TO MEN IN OUR SEXUALIZED WORLD

*“You are a VERY necessary voice in your boy’s life”*

Oh boy, this subject! You must have known we were going to include it because so many of the questions that were asked out of the 550 you sent in, were about sex and body parts!

Raising boys as a mom is challenging! We know! We don’t have the same anatomy, and we don’t know how it works. You will love these videos in our series. We both speak frankly, openly and honestly but there is an awful lot of laughter happening as we share our experiences!

All that to say that it is more essential than ever - in today’s sexualized culture - that YOU are the ones talking with your boys about all of this. You need to be having ongoing, open dialogue (age-appropriate), on all subjects related to sex, sexting, masturbation, oral sex, etc. because whether you like it or not, or believe it or not, it's going on right under their noses at school and they need somewhere to talk about it.

It's not easy to raise these subjects or to continue to be open about them. It can be uncomfortable. All we can say is cultivate your confidence, and push through the discomfort. Please hear us; you are a VERY necessary voice in your boy's life. You are responsible for training your boys, and we can tell you from experience that there are plenty of their friends on hand to give them advice if you avoid the subject, and you don't want that! Tell them that their friends know *nothing* and that you know *everything*!

Curiosity and fascination are normal. You don't want them to feel shame about their body parts or being naked, and my (Havilah) boys are always running around the house naked! (Seriously, can anyone else relate to that, they just don't seem to care about clothes!)

We share some great resources during the series on age-appropriate conversations, but it's a good idea to find out when their school plans on starting the sex education and then tackling it at home with your boys first. Once the conversation has started, keep it going, as often as you need to. It's up to you to decide when and where but for me (Lisa) we talk at the dinner table. We ask questions about school and what's going on there, and if there is anything they don't understand or are curious about. Build a

history with them, and you will find they come to you as they grow.

I think we have two big fears when it comes to our boys and sex: that they'll get hooked on pornography or that they'll get molested. From an early age, make sure to call pornography exactly what it is when you talk to them. Use safeguards and passwords in the house on all the computers and TVs. Explain that arousal is ok, it's preparation for something good, but things like pornography are manipulating that response out of them in a perverted and soulless way.

Set boundaries for them, and with them. If sleepovers are too risky, then have a 'no sleepover' policy and don't apologize for your hardline. Have a secret code they can use if they get to someone's house and they are uncomfortable with something that's going on. For example, they could phone and say, 'I have a tummy ache.' You ask no questions; you go straight round to collect them, bring them home and then talk about what it was.

If your boys complain with, 'It's so unfair, I never get to....' tell them you fear God more than you fear them and when they say, 'But mom, all my

friends...’ tell them you stand before God on *their* behalf, not their friends! Better to have them mad at you than unsafe.

*Trust* your intuition as a mom. If an individual doesn't feel safe, don't allow them in your home or near your boys. If something seems not quite right with any of your boys, pursue them. Go through their stuff if necessary. Don't encourage them to hide stuff by saying you don't want to violate their privacy.

Seduction is rampant in today's society. Girls are being more sexually aggressive and predatory in their advances. One of my (Lisa) sons went into a bathroom at a party, and there was a naked girl in there. He had been set up. When he refused her advances, she got mad and started spreading rumors that he was gay! Be aware of the pressures your boys are facing in their daily world at school.

Teach and model godly female behavior. Don't back down if they start to withdraw from you and things feel a little awkward. Pursue them! Teach them how to engage with *you* as well as their dad. They will be processing with a woman for the rest of their life, tell them that it's not what men do -

withdraw from a woman.

When they recognize your security, confidence and godly affection they will easily see the cheapness of seduction with its manipulation, control, and disempowerment.

Lastly and best of all, continually demonstrate to them that a godly woman will speak to their potential and not their basest desires. Find out each of your son's uniqueness, relate to them through that, love them, discipline them and train them in the way they should go. Also..... HAVE FUN!

Well, I think we've packed a lot into a small space. We've really only scratched the surface of what we cover in the series, but we wanted to give you an idea of what to expect and hope that you've enjoyed this sneak preview.

**We look forward to having you join us online!**

*LISA & HAVILAH*

*If you enjoyed this eBook, you'll love our Mom's Of Men series online!*

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## LISA BEVERE

Lisa's authentic, passionate, and witty teachings weave profound biblical truths with practical application. A New York Times best-selling author, her books are in the hands of millions worldwide. Lisa and her husband John, who's also a best-selling author and teacher, are the founders of Messenger International.



## HAVILAH CUNNINGTON

In addition to slaying dragons, Havilah is a wife, mom, author, communicator, and friend. She is a Pastor at Bethel Church, the Director of Moral Revolution, and Founder of Truth to Table. Recently, she began online Bible Studies hoping to inspire the world from her kitchen table and reaching thousands through her books *Radical Growth*, *I Do Hard Things*, *The Good Stuff*, and *Eat. Pray. Hustle.*, and *Soul Food*. Havilah's greatest joy is spending time with her husband, Ben, and their four young sons: Judah, Hudson, Grayson, and Beckham.