

## **Bringing Up Boys Book Discussion Guide**

### **Chapter 1: The Wonderful World of Boys**

What are some characteristics Dr. Dobson says are typical of boys?

Do you know any boys who fit that description?

If you do, would you want to change them? Why or why not?

### **Chapter 2: Vive la Différence**

What ideas about boys and girls were promoted by the 1970s “unisex” movement?

What have been some of the societal effects of this movement?

How do more current research findings contradict the theories of the 1970s?

What can parents (and other adults) do to counteract the effects of unisex thinking in the lives of their boys?

### **Chapter 3: So What *Is* the Difference?**

Describe the effects, both positive and negative, of testosterone, serotonin, and the amygdala on male temperaments.

Can you think of any men you know, either personally or through the media, who show evidence of high testosterone levels? What are some of the signs?

How does the male temperament balance out the female temperament? What does this indicate about male and female roles?

What are the symptoms of ADD and ADHD? Do you know any boys or men who show signs of these disorders? What can be done for them?

### **Chapter 4: Wounded Spirits**

What factors contribute to the “wounded spirits” that result in phenomena such as school shootings, violence, and drug use among boys?

What would you do if you saw these symptoms in a boy you care for?

Were you ever bullied when you were in school? Did you ever bully someone else? What advice would you give a boy who is being bullied?

What are some practical ways to protect our boys and preserve their spirits?

### **Chapter 5: The Essential Father**

Do you agree that fathers are considered “expendable” by many in our society? Why or why not?

If you agree, what forces have caused the role of fathers to weaken and diminish?

Why does the loss or absence of a father hit boys particularly hard?

### **Chapter 6: Fathers and Sons**

How does being a father to boys differ from being a father to girls?

Review the list of historical “contributions” of fathers found on pages 70-71:

- to serve as the family provider
- to serve as the leader of the clan
- to serve as protector
- to provide spiritual direction at home

Do you agree or disagree that each of the above is an important function of fathers? Why or why not? What happens to a family when any of these is absent?

What are some practical ways fathers can be involved in the lives of their young sons? Their teenage and college-age sons?

### **Chapter 7: Mothers and Sons**

How does being a mother to boys differ from being a mother to girls?

Review Dr. Dobson’s arguments against putting babies in day care (pages 85-88). Do you agree that public policy should support parents who choose to stay at home with their children?

What is the significance of the family meal? Are family meals important in your home?

What are some things a mom can do to encourage a stronger relationship between her husband and her son?

### **Chapter 8: Chasing the Caterpillar**

Do you think your parents spent enough time with you when you were a child? Why or why not?

Do you agree that the fast pace of modern life contributes to overcommitment, isolation, and a general breakdown of family and community ties? Why or why not?

How does the quest for prestige and material success impact family life? How does the stress affect boys in particular?

What are some practical steps parents can take to slow down their lives and spend more time with their children?

### **Chapter 9: The Origins of Homosexuality**

Dr. Dobson says, “If homosexuality were genetically transmitted, it would be inevitable, immutable, irresistible, and untreatable. Fortunately, it is not. Prevention is effective. Change is possible. Hope is available. And Christ is in the business of healing” (page 117). Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

What are some of the causes of homosexuality? Why is it important for parents of boys to know the answer to this question?

How can parents, especially fathers, help boys develop a healthy gender identity?

### **Chapter 10: Single Parents and Grandparents**

What are some of the effects of society’s easy acceptance of divorce and cohabitation (and waning support of traditional, lifelong marriage) on children, particularly boys?

Is remarriage always a good solution? Why or why not?

What are some things a single mom can do to involve a strong, caring male role model in her son’s life?

Did you have a strong relationship with one or more of your grandparents?

What are some ways that grandparents can get (and stay) involved in the lives of their grandchildren?

### **Chapter 11: “Let’s Go for It!”**

Do you know any boys who are natural competitors? What are they like?

What are some reasons to encourage boys in sports and competitive activities?

How can parents respond appropriately when their boys display a disappointing performance?

Do you agree with Dr. Dobson that it is a mistake to make boys compete against girls? Why or why not?

### **Chapter 12: Men R Fools**

How is today’s feminism different from 1960s feminism?

Have you seen portrayals of “stupid” men recently in the media? How about portrayals of “stupid” women, homosexuals, or minorities? How do you think such images shape our culture?

Do you agree that there is general societal devaluing of men and masculine roles?

What can we do to sensitize others to pervasive bias against boys and men and to counteract it in the lives of boys?

### **Chapter 13: Boys in School**

What trends are affecting the education of boys in public schools today? What have been the results?

Why do boys generally have a tougher time in school than girls do? In what ways could schools better accommodate boys?

What are steps concerned adults can take to improve boys' educational experiences? Have you ever considered an alternative to public school for your boy, such as private school or homeschooling?

### **Chapter 14: Predators**

Dr. Dobson explains that postmodernism "teaches that truth is not only unknowable from God, whom postmodernism perceives as a myth, or from man, who has no right to speak for the rest of us. Rather, truth doesn't exist at all. *Nothing* is right or wrong, *nothing* is good or evil, *nothing* is positive or negative. Everything is relative. All that matters is 'what's right for me and what's right for you'" (page 199). Have you witnessed examples of postmodern thinking in contemporary culture, media, education, business, etc.?

What are the effects of teaching children (and adults) that "they owe their existence to random chance in a chaotic universe with no design and no designer" (page 200)?

What do you think of Dr. Dobson's assertion that children are being "trained to kill" (pages 212-214)?

What can parents do to combat the effects of postmodern thinking on boys' lives?

### **Chapter 15: Staying Close**

Why must parents put so much time and energy into building good relationships with their sons?

Do you agree that rules are a less effective means of corralling boys than in past generations? Why or why not?

Why is it important to maintain traditions in the home?

### **Chapter 16: Disciplining Boys**

Do you discipline your children differently from how your parents disciplined you? If so, how?

What factors account for the change in child-rearing practices over the last few decades?

Do you agree with Rev. Ren Broekhuizen's observation that "love can frown" (page 232)? What do you think this statement means?

How can adults encourage boys to develop a strong work ethic?

**Chapter 17: The Ultimate Priority**

What kind of spiritual legacy are you passing on to the boys in your life? Is it different from the way you were taught about spiritual matters? If so, how?

What is the difference between giving a boy material blessings and giving him transcendental values? What can happen to a boy when there is an absence of meaning in his life?

Think of a boy you're close to. How would you compare his "spiritual age" (spiritual maturity) to his chronological age? What are some signs of spiritual growth and maturity?

How can you help a boy you care about to understand that God knows him personally and loves him individually?

If you are rearing a boy, list two or three practical steps (appropriate to his age) that you can take to strengthen his spiritual life.