

EXCERPT



Raising Sons of Promise
A Guide for Single Mothers of Boys

December 7, 2021 | \$18, 224 pages, paperback | 978-1-5430-0289-6

As a single mother, you might find yourself in the difficult position of raising sons alone, wounded by the broken promises of your child's father. But God offers a greater promise to you and your family. Roland Warren, himself the child of a single mother, invites you on a journey to heal your heart and parent your boys to become healthy men, good husbands, and strong fathers.

Perspective from a Son Raised in a Fatherless Home

I'm sitting on your sofa playing video games. I'm zooming Matchbox cars across your kitchen table or building with LEGO bricks on the floor. Maybe I'm playing ball in the house again, even though you've told me one hundred times not to.

I'm your son.

Okay. Obviously, I'm not really your son. But I do understand him. I bet that's why you picked up this book. You have a son, and you may feel worried because he's going to be raised without his dad.

Chances are, this isn't the way you planned it. Maybe you were married for a while until everything fell apart. Or, maybe your son's father was never around—and you've been trying to navigate alone since his birth the unique world of boys. Perhaps this is the kind of book you never, ever planned to need or read. The mere thought of that may be aggravating.

No matter your situation, there's one thing I know for sure—your son needs you.

Boys and girls are not the same. Yes, we have many similarities, but our differences are glaring. You can try to raise your son like you were raised, but that may be frustrating for you both. Boys think, communicate, and act differently than girls do; they have different needs. For this reason, I want to offer you some insight into how boys tick so that you can parent him successfully. You're already under a lot of stress. Parenting solo is no easy feat. So I hope that by helping you decode some of what your son is processing, I can lighten that load.

I've spent decades processing my childhood, trying to reconcile what could have been from what was. You see, I was raised by a single mother. Growing up, almost all of the women I knew and loved were single mothers too. As a boy and a teenager I watched many of my aunts navigate the challenges of parenting alone. My own sister has spent much of her life parenting as a single mother, as have all of my female cousins on my mother's side. I guess you could say that married fathers were in short supply in the world in which I was raised.

Decades later I served as president of an organization called National Fatherhood Initiative and was forced to stare eyeball-to-eyeball with issues of my own father's absence. Now as president of Care Net—one of the largest networks of pregnancy centers in the United States—I work to support, and speak to, lots of single mothers. This role has motivated me to gain a better understanding of my own mother's story. Since her recent passing, I've developed a deeper comprehension of what she endured and how that impacted her mothering and me.

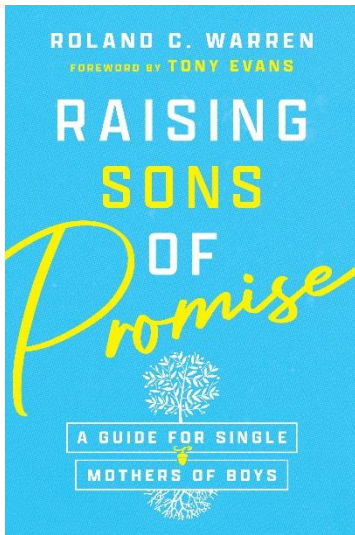


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"We have an urgent crisis in the United States: fatherlessness. Research clearly reveals that father absence negatively affects children emotionally, physically, intellectually, and cognitively. As a pediatrician, I have worked with many single mothers over the past thirty years, and they need far more help than they are getting. I strongly recommend Roland Warren's Raising Sons of Promise. Our sons need it and our country needs it. Mothers (even married ones) need help, and this book can offer it." —Meg Meeker, MD, author of Strong Mothers, Strong Sons

Through my personal observations, experience, and research I have a deeply rooted sensitivity of this topic. I've lived it, been immersed in it, and then studied carefully how the research aligned with this world I know so well. This comprehension and appreciation for the plight of a mom parenting solo has led me to uncover three main areas where single moms can get stuck. Unless these areas are acknowledged and addressed, a mother's emotional health will struggle, and her son can suffer the consequences. Through the pages that follow we'll explore how to find hope and healing in these three main areas: loss, forgiveness, and expectations.

Together we'll explore some of the burden you may feel you have to carry as a single parent, and then we'll shift our focus to that boy who's counting on you. Maybe he's only three, splashing so much water out of the tub you're sure the bathroom will flood. Or maybe he's eleven and already spending so much time on his screens. You're worried you'll never get his attention. Or maybe he's thirteen, hanging with the wrong set of friends and pulling away. Perhaps you've tried everything and nothing disarms his defiance.

Together we'll explore what he's going through—what his world looks like, what he may be feeling, and what he needs from you. He's dealing with loss, forgiveness, and expectations too. Then, assuming you don't want him to live in your basement playing video games forever, we'll also look at healthy ways for you to help him prepare to launch and, one day, to be good husband and a good father.

The Bible encourages us that there's nothing we'll ever go through that Jesus hasn't already endured. But I wonder if that feels hard to believe right now. Jesus was never a single mother, you may argue. I hope to comfort you with the truth that Jesus does indeed understand your plight. And that he sees you. In fact, the Bible tells a powerful story of a single mom named Hagar and her son, a boy named Ishmael. It was almost a decade ago that I first connected to this story, and that's what truly started my healing journey.

—Taken from chapter one, "I Am Ishmael"

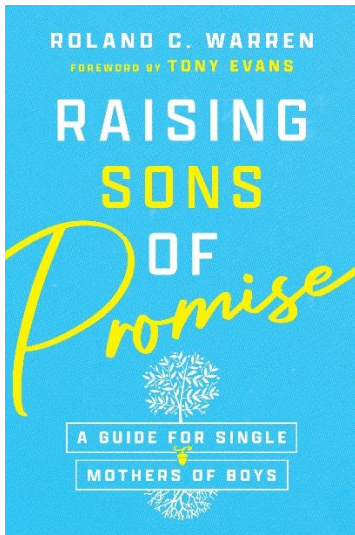


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Q & A



Raising Sons of Promise *A Guide for Single Mothers of Boys*

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"Moms of boys will find hope in these pages. There is big-picture hope to help them dream, and practical day-to-day hope to increase their confidence. Engaging illustrations, the right amount of Scripture applied perfectly (reading about the prodigal son gave me chills), inspiring data, and practical well-explained ideas make this book a valuable read. It won't make anyone feel more overwhelmed. Instead, Roland Warren's approach will diminish the feeling. There will also be less fear, shame, and blame and more courage, grace, mercy, and truth. Single moms can parent boys well. Roland has proof!" —Kathy Koch, founder of Celebrate Kids and author of Five to Thrive

Seen, Heard, and Not Alone

This book speaks to the heart of what group of readers?

Roland Warren: This book speaks directly to the heart of single mothers who find themselves in the difficult position of raising boys alone. I am Ishmael, the son of a man who made promises to my mother and me, but didn't always keep them. There are more than nine million households headed by single mothers as well as millions who want to help them and understand what single mothers raising boys face. Moreover, once largely characteristic of poor women or minorities, unfortunately single motherhood is growing and becoming a new social norm. As the rate of live births to single mothers continues to increase (currently 40 percent of live births are to single moms), the number of children being raised without their fathers in the home—or in their lives at all—will continue to rise.

This data is already having devastating consequences on boys who are falling behind in school, falling into addictions and dangerous behaviors—including incarceration—as well as falling into the habit of repeating the behaviors of their own absent or neglectful fathers. So, single mothers, who are often the only parental influence on their sons, are critical to reversing this troubling trend.

The bottom line is if you are a single mother raising a son or someone who loves and wants to help a single mother in this circumstance, you need to read this book.

What is something unique about your book?

Roland: This book offers insight not from the perspective of a fellow single mother but from the perspective of a man raised by one, giving readers the opportunity to learn from all he witnessed and observed from his vantage point, which, of course, is the perspective a son will have. Many single moms don't realize the link between their parenting and the way their sons will view marriage, fatherhood, and family life.

In what ways do you hope your book will encourage and support single mothers?

Roland: No matter how a mother found herself alone and parenting—whether by choice or by chance—I offer truth and encouragement to her heart. The principles I highlight offer her truth enveloped in grace. After reading this book, I want single mothers to feel seen, heard, and not alone.

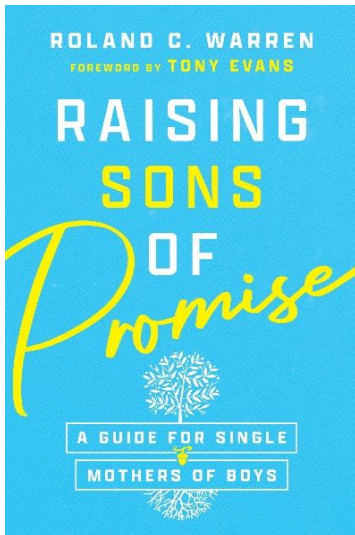


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BIO



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"Single mothers entrusted with the upbringing of boys often feel inadequate to help guide their sons toward manhood—and those of us who were raised without the benefit of a father know firsthand the unique challenges inherent in this family structure. However, Roland Warren has some invaluable reassurance for single moms: the Lord is more than willing to empower and equip you in your vital role."

—Jim Daly, president of Focus on the Family

Nationally Recognized Author

"Like every mother, the single mother's journey is multifaceted and complex. Some days are filled with laughter and joy while other are wrought with exhaustion and insecurity. But a single mother carries the weight of a thousand burdens that she was never intended to carry alone. She works tirelessly to successfully juggle it all, taking great care to ensure it seems effortless to outside eyes. In *Raising Sons of Promise*, Roland Warren is cracking open the lid of these burdens so that healing, transformation, and hope can arise. Using his own story as a launching pad, he weaves encouragement and truth into every page." —Jennifer Maggio, CEO of The Life of a Single Mom and author of *The Church and the Single Mom*

Roland Warren is the CEO of Care Net, one of the largest networks of crisis pregnancy centers in North America. A graduate of Princeton University and the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, Roland is an inspirational servant leader with a heart for Christ and a mind for business.

After twenty years in the corporate world (with IBM, Pepsi, and Goldman Sachs), Roland spent eleven years as president of the National Fatherhood Initiative. His national media appearances include the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, the *Today Show*, CNN, C-SPAN, *Dateline NBC*, Fox News Channel, and Black Entertainment Television. He has been interviewed by major radio and newspaper outlets such as the *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, the *Washington Post*, *O Magazine*, *Ebony*, *Christianity Today*, and *Essence*. He is the author of *Bad Dads of the Bible*.

Heather Creekmore, contributing author to this book, is a podcaster and mother of four. She is author of two books designed to encourage women who struggle with body image and comparison: *Compared to Who?* and *The Burden of Better*.



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