

## **The Jonas Brothers: Mama's Boys or Gentlemen?**

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When the Jonas Brothers' movie came out, it seemed everyone was focused on the young men's relationship to their mother and potential girlfriends with the term "mama's boys" getting thrown around. As an expert on mama's boys and daddy's girls, I have an answer as to whether or not the Jonas Brothers are mama's boys. The answer may surprise you.

There are a number of reasons why people speculate about whether or not Kevin, Joe, and Nick are mama's boys but the number one reason that attracts attention is their purity rings, signifying their promise to practice celibacy until marriage. While many of their fans have only learned about purity rings because of the Jonas Brothers, purity rings have been around for at least fifteen years among Evangelical Christians.

The brothers' parents are Evangelical Christians with their dad, Kevin, Sr. being a former Assembly of God pastor. Kevin, Sr. and his wife, Denise, have taken an active role in their sons' careers in an effort to protect their children from the ravages of fame. The young men are receptive to their parents' leadership and are respectful, following in the religious belief system of their parents. Somehow, this has earned them the moniker, "mama's boys!"

For some reason, when a son wears a purity ring and takes that pledge, instead of people seeing it as part of his relationship with God, they assume it says more about his relationship to his mother. Maybe that is because they think such a pledge must make the mother breathe a huge sigh of relief! Similarly, many look at daughters who take the purity pledge and draw assumptions about their relationships with their fathers rather than looking at the girls' relationship with God.

The purity rings and pledge are viewed as an extension of the parents' control over their teenagers rather than as part of a teen's maturation process and ability to have his or her own relationship with God that includes responsibility and boundaries. Granted, many parents must appreciate the advantageous nature of the purity pledge and even use it to manipulate their teenagers. All they are really doing is manipulating their own selves into a comfort zone where they can feel their children are safe! Whether or not a teen takes that pledge in the first place or lives up to in the second place is ultimately a decision the teen or young adult makes.

That said, I do not make a connection between Kevin, Joe, and Nick taking the purity pledge and their potentially being mama's boys. That pledge is born of their religion, family tradition, and loyalty.

Another thing that makes people think the Jonas Brothers are mama's boys is the extent to which their parents are in their lives and careers and on the road with them. However, both parents are present, not just mom. Nick has reportedly said, "We're just normal guys. We're not perfect. We're just living every day as it comes, trying to make our mom proud." It brings to mind the thing everyone, man or woman, is inclined to do the

first time a movie camera is turned on him or her and that is to smile at the camera and say, “Hi, Mom!” Between childbirth and all the ways that mothers extend themselves and sacrifice for their children, mom tends to come first in all our hearts.

So, this isn't a case of a stage mother hovering and overseeing. Both Jonas parents are involved in protecting their sons. In an interview with Rachel Ray last May, Denise said, “What has been so fabulous for us is we've remained a family unit and been able to be in tact as a family. And I've been able to be mom and in their life and their dad is there...” Denise says that she and Kevin, Sr. practice gratitude, teaching their children to do so as well. What that means is that whenever anything good happens to them as individuals or a family, they take the time to thank God for it.

Denise's enthusiasm for being able to be in her sons' lives even as they pursue their rock and roll careers is not the joy of an overbearing, overprotective mother. It is, rather, the pleasure of a responsible mom and dad who have spent more than two decades training their sons to be responsible as well.

Mama's boys are created when the father is not able to extend the invitation to his sons to leave the sphere of influence of their mother and enter his sphere of influence where they can learn to become men, centered in the assurance of their own masculinity. That invitation is not given when the father is absent either physically, emotionally, or mentally. Also, usually, a father who himself is a mama's boy cannot extend the invitation because he remains in his mother's sphere of influence.

Sons that are issued this invitation from the father, answer it over a period of years from ten years old into their teens. After they have spent time in their father's sphere of influence, being challenged by rites of passage and the competitive edge of keeping up with dad in conversation and intellect, sons are free to incorporate both parents' sphere of influence, creating balanced, grounded young men who have more options for love and success in life.

In families where fathers extend the invitation to their sons to inter the father's sphere of influence, five things must occur.

1. The father (or significant male role model) must be physically available.
2. The father (or male role model) must be emotionally available.
3. The father (or male role model) must be able to “see” the son as a man.
4. The mother must honor and respect the father and masculinity in general.
5. The mother must release the son to the father.

Briefly and for the sake of parents of daughters, it is a similar situation where young women who are grounded in their femininity have been issued an invitation from the mother to leave the father's sphere of influence for a time and reenter the sphere of influence of the mother. So, for that to happen, five things must occur.

1. The mother (or significant female role model) must be physically available.

2. The mother (or female role model) must be emotionally available.
3. The mother (or female role model) must be able to “see” the daughter as a woman.
4. The father must honor and respect the mother and femininity in general.
5. The father must release the daughter to the mother.

From all outward appearances, the Jonas Brothers’ parents are busy accomplishing all five of these requirements for raising sons who are grounded in their masculinity yet respectful of women. They are, in essence, old fashioned young gentlemen!

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