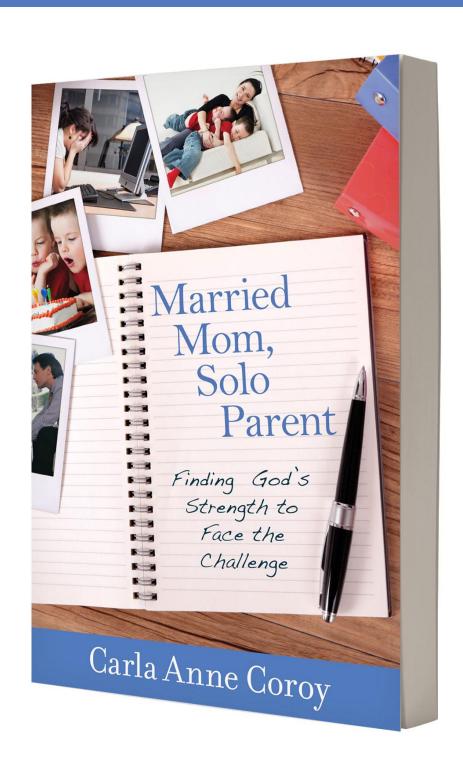
# **Personal Reflection Journal**



# Welcome

### How to Use this Journal

Hi there! I'm so glad you've decided to go a little deeper with *Married Mom, Solo Parent*. My prayer is that you will grow in your understanding of yourself and your situation, in how your family can thrive in your husband's absence, and in the understanding of yourself as a Daughter of the King.

The purpose of this journal is for you to grab a hold of the tools and resources in a very real and tangible way so you will be equipped to find God's strength to face the challenge of being a married mom who solo parents. I hope you will be full of hope and renewed motivation to be an outstanding mom, wife, woman, Christian, and friend as a result of this book and the study.

There are a few ways to use this journal.

### **BY YOURSELF**

Read a chapter at a time and then stop to answer the questions in this journal. Take your time with the questions. Some will take more time than others. Some are very practical, while others are more personal and address the heart on a deeper level. Set aside as much quiet time as you can to go through the questions.

### WITH A MENTOR OR FRIEND

If you have a mentor already, you are very blessed! Mentors are the kind of people who love us, yet nudge us further forward into the full purpose God has designed us for. A close friend may be able to do the same with you. If you do this with a mentor/friend, I suggest you both get a copy of the book and this Personal Reflection Journal so you can work through them at home on your own. Then get together once a week or so to discuss the questions and pray for each other.

### WITH A GROUP

Perhaps you have a group of supportive friends: Women who encourage each other to be godly wives and mothers, and who are fun to be around! If so, you might work through portions of the book and this journal on your own, and then gather together to discuss some of the less personal questions in the journal. This will keep your whole group on the same page, and you'll have solid resources and tools with which to encourage each. You'll also have great discussion material!

If you would rather use a study guide for your group, the Small Group Study Guide for *Married Mom*, *Solo Parent* is available on my website free of charge.

### SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK

I would love to hear from you. Please feel free to send me a note at my website, www.carlaanne.com.

Many blessings!

Carla Anne

# Introduction

### What Is a Solo Parent?

How would <i>you</i> define a married solo parent or married single mom?
Of the difficult questions listed on page 13, which have you ever asked? What other questions have you asked that are not listed?

How many other people do you know that are married moms, solo parents?
What do you hope to learn, experience, or receive as you read the book and go through this Personal Reflection Guide?
My prayers and thoughts

# **Chapter One**

# This is Not What I Signed Up For!

At the beginning of this chapter, Carla Anne shares a brief summary of what life was like for her as a married single mom during the early years of her marriage. What circumstances in your life add up to make you feel like a married single mom?
Consider the title of this chapter. What specific things would you say you did NOT sign up for?

Carla Anne explains that there are benefits to being a married single mom. Some of her benefits included having full influence on the kids, not having to check in with her husband before making decisions or rearranging furniture, and having the freedom to choose what and where she wanted to eat. What sort of benefits do you see in your situation?
Read "The Challenge" (near the end of this chapter) two or three times. Which parts of "The Challenge" seem easy for you? Which seem more difficult? Which seem next to impossible? Explain your answers.
EASY
DIFFICULT
DIFFICULT
DIFFICULT
DIFFICULT
DIFFICULT  IMPOSSIBLE

Do you have a relationship with Jesus Christ? If so, write down a little bit of what that relationship looks like today. If not, write down your response to Psalm 34:8. ("Taste and see that the LORD is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!")
My prayers and thoughts

# **Chapter Two**

# The Emotions of Solo Parenting

Carla Anne says we often don't realize we have expectations until they are not met. Give a few examples of expectations you didn't realize you had for your marriage until they weren't met.
Write out an honest (gut wrenching if necessary) letter to God. Include all the things you dreamed of that have not come to pass. Write out your emotions. Write out your commitment to releasing those expectations (for more detailed instructions, see page 24 of <i>Married Mom, Solo Parent</i> ).

Spend some time praying and asking God what kinds of expectations or desires He'd like you to have. Write them out here.
When do you feel the loneliest in your marriage? Why do you think that is?
What are some of your fears? Write them down here—no matter how silly or strange or scary.

Spend some time in prayer giving your fears to God and asking Him for His truth and peace in each situation. Pray as well about your children's fears, asking God to give you wisdom in how to help them feel safer. Write out some of your prayer here.
Spend a few moments considering the fact that God chose you, set a purpose for you, and loved you even before the creation of the world. Describe how this truth makes you feel.

Honestly consider how often you read the Bible and pray. Make a plan to go "RPO" (reading, praying, obeying) every day. Write down what time, where, and which days you will do this. Have a friend or Bible study group keep you accountable.
Make a list of ten things about your husband you can honestly thank God for. Share them with your friends.
1.
2.
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4.
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8.
9.
10.
Does your family schedule need to be readjusted to allow you more rest, your family more time together, and your kids more down time? What are you doing well? What would you like to change?

How have you "lowered the standard" for yourself because of your extenuating circumstances? (i.e. What would you do differently, better, to a higher standard if only your husband) Write out how you can make a change in this area.
Think about situations in your life where systemic anger has reared its head. Confess that anger. Then ask God for a few ideas on how to handle that. Jot them down here.
What thoughts and feelings come to your mind and heart when you consider that God has put his blessing on your marriage?

Read Job 38-42 (see <i>Married Mom, Solo Parent</i> , Appendix B, page 264). Write out your thoughts about who God is in a worshipful prayer to Him.
Now write a prayer of confession to God. Ask Him for forgiveness for the way you have handled some of your emotions, and ask Him for a vision or words of hope. Write down that hope here for your reference.

My prayers and thoughts

# **Chapter Three**

### **Emotional Divorce**

In your own words, explain what emotional divorce is.
On a scale of 1-10, if 1 is completely emotionally unified with your husband and 10 is completely emotionally divorced from him, where would you rate your heart in your marriage today? Why?

How does the story of Hosea challenge your ideas?
What has been the bigger pursuit in your life—a happy (or better, or different) marriage or your relationship with God? Be honest. Explain.

Some women question whether emotional divorce is really all that bad. Others go so far as to say it benefits a marriage. Write down two or three reasons why <i>you</i> think emotional divorce can devastate a marriage.
Do you wait to talk to your husband about difficult issues until you have heard from God through His word and prayer? What might change in the way you communicate and in your marriage if you did that regularly?
Give an example of a healthy boundary you have set or one you might need to set.

My prayers and thoughts

# **Chapter Four**

# Life in Community

How have you noticed your relationships change since you became a married single mom? (Or since you've had children?)
Describe a great friend—one you currently have, have had in the past, or wish you had.
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If you would choose a "party" to meet new people, what company would you choose? (Examples include Tupperware, Cookie Lee, Norwex, Epicure, Partylite, etc.)
How much time do you spend connecting with friends each
How much time do you spend connecting with friends each DAY:
DAY:
DAY: WEEK:
DAY:  WEEK:  MONTH:  Are there any friendships you may need to consider spending less energy on? What actions can you take
DAY:  WEEK:  MONTH:  Are there any friendships you may need to consider spending less energy on? What actions can you take
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How could, or do, you truly fellowship with other Christian women?
List ten things you have been blessed with in the last week or two.
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7.
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10.

# **Chapter Five**

# Discipline Divided

How are your parenting styles different from your husband's? How do you complement each other?
Carla Anne explains discipline as "caring, loving ways to guide our children to something, or guard them from something, someone or themselves". What is your opinion of this definition? How would you describe healthy discipline?

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- I. Give the instruction
- II. Set the standard
- III. Provide a time frame
- IV. Motivate with a reward or consequence

How does this compare to how you currently assign tasks to your children? What are some ideas for adjusting how you handle chores in your home?
What are the most common forms of positive reinforcement you use with your kids?

What are some creative consequences that you have used, have heard of, or that you can come up with, that match the crime?
When are you tempted to let your kids off the hook? What is the weak spot you need to watch out for in your own discipline style?
Does Carla Anne's explanation of Proverbs 22:6 ("train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it") give you a feeling of freedom or responsibility? Explain.

Think about each of your children, and if they are old enough write out what their "bent" is or what their areas of strength are. After you are done, take some time to pray over them, thanking God and blessing them. Write out some of your prayer here.

Have you ever disagreed with your husband's discipline of the kids? How did you react or respond? Do you give him room to parent his way? If so, how do you do that?
Spend some time in prayer asking God to give you a vision or picture of how you can help your husband become the incredible dad he is meant to be. Write it down here so you don't forget!

# **Chapter Six**

### Those Should Be His Chores!

How did your mom and dad (or those who spent the most time raising you) divide up the chores and roles in your childhood home?
How have you and your husband divided up the chores? Is there a difference between what you have talked about, and how the chores have ended up being divided?

Of all the tasks involved in running a household, which task do you find the most difficult? What are some creative ways you could get that done, or who could you recruit to help you with that?
Have you left room in your household for your husband to be needed, or have you taken over everything?
How are you, or how could you, pass the mantle of leadership on to your children, especially your son(s), to build up their confidence so they will grow into mature, responsible, hard-working adults?

# **Chapter Seven**

# Keep My Mind and the House?

Which rooms in your house	cause you the most mess stress? What would a	a stress-free house look like?
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Make a plan here on how ar rooms in your house. For ea date you plan to have this co	nd when you will get vicious with making your ach room write the date you plan to start uncluttompleted by.	tering and optimizing, and the
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many people from overwhelmin	moothly at your house? Carla Anne's la g laundry woes. You can download her What could you do to win your laundry	Laundry Labels from her website
things in each category (up to yo	arough the list of chores (pages 134-136 our child's age) that you still need to train If it is overwhelming, just start with 3-5	in that child to do. Make a plan on
senedare for training.		
CHILD	TRAINING NEEDED	TRAINING DATE
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-	TRAINING NEEDED	TRAINING DATE

CHILD	TRAINING NEEDED	TRAINING DATE
In your opinion, what is	don't need to learn how to be martyrs. Your job the difference? What is the model you are living your parenting and training to raise servants ins	g in front of your kids? What

## **Chapter Eight**

### Make the Most of Mealtime

What was mealtime like in your childhood home? How would your children describe mealtime at your house? In the next twenty-four hours, ask your children (if old enough) to describe your mealtimes and ask what <i>they</i> think a family meal should be like.
How did the Child Trends Data Bank 2003 Child Trends Report surprise you or confirm what you suspected? Knowing what you know now, how important will it be to your family to establish a family meal and what do you think might change in your home if you did?

Which meal would be the easiest to establish as a family meal? List some quick and easy meal ideas you could use to make this new routine as pain-free as possible to integrate into your life.

MEAL:
MEAL IDEA #1:
MEAL IDEA #2:
MEAL IDEA #3:
MEAL IDEA #4:
Brainstorm some great open-ended questions that might get your family talking around the kitchen table. Write them down here and then use them this week! For more conversation starters and other helpful tools check out the resources section of Carla Anne's website, <a href="www.carlaanne.com">www.carlaanne.com</a> .
What kinds of distractions and interruptions will you need to manage in order for you to make the most of the family meal? How will you manage those distractions?

## **Chapter Nine**

## Celebrations Wrapped in Loneliness

What are the loneliest celebrations for you? Describe some of the best celebrations you've ever had—with or without your husband.
How have you helped your husband be part of the celebrations even when he can't be there in person?

How have you handled the hurt in the hearts of your children when their dad disappoints them regarding a celebration or special event? Spend some time in prayer asking God for words and ideas that might help heal the hurt in your kids. Write them down here to keep for reference if it happens again.
What are some new traditions and celebrations you could start or some new twists to old traditions you could implement?

Have you experienced Jesus as your Best Friend? How and When? If you haven't and you'd like to, write out a prayer here asking Him to be your Best Friend, and commit to loving Him, learning about Him and obeying Him every day.

## **Chapter Ten**

### Give Me a Break!

Most married single moms say they don't get enough time to take care of themselves. Why do you think this is so very important for every mom? Why is this particularly important for married single moms?
Have you ever hired a babysitter? If not, why not? If you have had babysitters in the past, do you ever hire a babysitter just so you can rest and rejuvenate or do you leave it for those times when you <i>have</i> to be gone? What would need to change so you could hire a babysitter to allow you to get some rest?

Write out some of your own creative ideas for Bitty Breaks—breaks that take less than ten to twenty minutes and don't require you to leave the house.
What free or cheap ideas do you have, or have you used in the past, to take a longer break? Schedule two or three of those into your schedule now.

How can you set up or adjust your quiet time with God so it can be consistent, meaningful, and long-term?
Where? When? How long? What will you read or study? Do you need a journal or notebook? Do you need to adjust the environment to make it more conducive to a distraction free time with God?

## **Chapter Eleven**

## Honoring the Man You Don't See Enough

Why do you think it is so hard to honor and respect a man who is gone or chooses to be uninvolved in family life?
Do you respect and honor your husband? How and why?

What is your response to Carla Anne's statement that eternity is planted in our hearts, and how we live, interact with, and respect our husbands will make a difference for eternity?
Carla Anne suggests that we use Philippians 2:7-8 as a reminder to treat our husbands the way Christ treated us—giving up His rights and dying on the cross for us. That isn't always easy. In what ways do you find this easy to do, and in what ways do you find this difficult? Spend some time praying about this and asking God to give you the strength to do this well.

Write down some good things you need to remember. These could be memories, vacations, celebrations, affirmations, or whatever—good things your husband has done, or that you have done together. Try for at least three.
It is a struggle to rein in our thoughts about our husbands, especially if they've really been annoying us, hurting us, or avoiding us. We are called by God to do it though! Make it a habit to think thoughts that match the Philippians 4:8 standard. Start by writing five to ten things here about your husband that are true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy.

## **Chapter Twelve**

### I Have Needs Too, You Know!

Carla Anne talks about modesty of the heart. How would you define what that is? Do you feel like you consistently live with modesty of the heart? How could you improve in this area?
Have you committed emotional adultery in your heart? Is there someone—other than God or your husband— whose words, glances, and touch cause your heart to race? What about comparing your husband to others, or working toward compliments and affirmations from other men? If so, take time now to confess that to God and to make a commitment to live with a pure heart and mind. Write out some of your prayer here.

What action do you need to take (such as no longer reading romance novels, watching soap operas, or engaging in online forums) to end, or protect against, any fantasy relationships and to renew your mind?
If masturbation and fantasy have been part of your life, ask God to reveal to your heart His passion for purity and passion within your marriage. Ask Him for words of counsel and hope that will keep you motivated to maintain purity and to wait for the fulfillment of passionate love within your marriage. Write down those words of hope here.

"resurrect" them after this. Then ask the Lord to tie your heart to His so you can be free to love your husband without hindrance. When you are done, destroy the paper or cross out the names. This act symbolizes the truth that they no longer have a hold on you or your marriage.

Are there heart ties (sometimes called soul ties) that need to be removed from your heart? If you are keeping this journal private, feel free to use the space below. If not, find a separate piece of paper for this exercise. Ask God to give you the names of all the people with whom you have a heart tie. Write them down. Then one by one confess them to Him and ask Him to break that tie. Make a commitment to never

## **Chapter Thirteen**

### The Father Your Kids Need

What effects does your lifestyle have on your kids? How does your husband contribute to that (positively or negatively)? How do you contribute to that (positively or negatively)?
If your children were asked (why not try asking them?) what you have taught them about Jesus and the power He can have in their lives, what would they say? Do you feel you have done everything in your power to introduce them to the Jesus who can heal and hold hearts?

Have you experienced God's presence in your life in the midst of the mess, the hurt, the crazy stuff, and the injustice? Spend time in prayer asking God to show Himself plainly to you in the midst of your life. Ask Him to reveal Himself as Emmanuel God with you. Write about this below.
Describe how you model prayer, Bible reading, journaling, and church attendance for your children? What could you do to be a better model and be more intentional about your actions?

Spend some time praying about each of your children. Write out some of your prayer here. Ask God for a specific and tangible idea of how to show them unconditional love today. Write it down and then do it

## Chapter Fourteen

### So Now You Want to Be a Part of This Family, Huh?

What sort of things do you find the most difficult when your husband comes home and how do you normally react? What would change if you became the kind of woman he would be anxious to come home to?
How do you or could you create opportunities for your husband to succeed at home?

Put yourself in your husband's place for a few minutes What might it be like to finally be home and not fit in, not know the schedule, or feel like you are in the way? What can you do practically to help him fit in again?
Forgiveness is necessary and the most needed ingredient in your marriage when your husband comes home. How can you practice quick forgiveness—both before he comes home and after he has arrived—to make your marriage and home a safe refuge for your man?
How will you live for the eternity that has been planted in your heart?

## Chapter Fifteen

### From My Husband's Heart

Trent says, "Men are Clueless". What kinds of things do you think your husband might be (or might have been) "clueless" about in regards to you and your marriage? What do you think you could do to help "clue him in"?

Does your husband know you are praying for him? Are you praying for him? Trent shared that Jesus' parable of the sower is a picture of growing in Christ—where do you see your husband in that picture? Based on that idea, how should you pray? Take time right now to pray for him. Write down all or part of your prayer here.

Spend some time asking God for His vision of your husband and His plans for Him. This might take a few days, but during that time every time you feel like God is giving you a glimpse into His bigger picture for your husband, jot those thoughts down here.

Would you say that your husband sees your quiet witness? Does he hear nagging or notice you close your mouth when you would normally rant and rave? Does he see you spend time in the Word and in prayer? (If you are brave you can ask him! Otherwise, ask the Lord to reveal this to you in prayer.) What might you need to do differently to ensure a solid witness in your home and marriage?
Now that you have spent time searching your heart and God's heart in regards to your married solo parenting lifestyle, spend some time in prayer specifically for yourself. Ask God to make you into a woman who pursues Him with a lifelong commitment to obedience rather than a happy or perfect marriage. Ask God to lead you day by day to become a daughter of the King who worships Him in private, in public, in her words, in her actions, in her parenting, and in her marriage. Commit your ways to Him and then thank Him!