



BARE MARRIAGE

HEALTHY, EVIDENCE-BASED, BIBLICAL ADVICE FOR SEX & MARRIAGE

with Sheila Wray Gregoire

For Women Only:

What You Need to Know about the Inner Lives of Men

Shaunti Feldhahn

SYNOPSIS

Discover the truth men want women to know so wives can adjust to their husbands' struggles.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

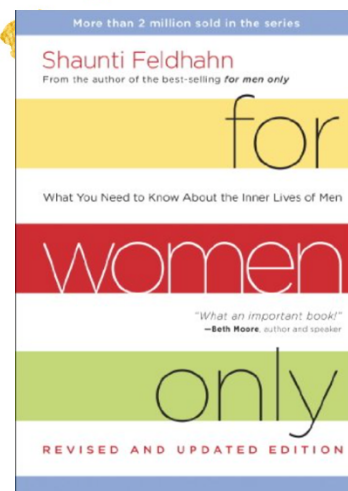
- Uses substandard research practices throughout her surveys. Shares findings about men's propensity to lust that have been debunked and shown to cause harm to marriages.
- Rather than showing how women can help create an intimate marriage based on emotional and relational health, encourages women to cater to men's fragile egos by not challenging them.
- Bases the book on gender stereotypes, many of which are harmful or simply untrue.

BASED ON POOR RESEARCH FOUNDATION

- Asserts "men need unconditional respect" based on a badly worded survey question her pilot study and survey designer both flagged as problematic. Declares a gender difference (that women want love instead) without surveying women. When other researchers asked women the same question, there was no gender difference.
- Elicits inaccurate findings like "98% of men can't not notice a woman with a great body". One possible response included in the 98% was "It is impossible not to be aware that she is there, but I try to stop myself from looking," (134) leading to an unsupported conclusion that all men constantly objectify women. Another possible answer was, "I openly stare at her, and drool forms on my lower lip", typical of the unserious nature of her survey questions.
- Bases the idea of the "visual wiring of the male brain" on outdated studies from 2001 and 2004. More recent meta-analyses of 61 studies including 1,850 participants (Mitricheva et al., 2019) and a huge meta-synthesis of three decades of MRI scans (Eliot et al., 2021) find no such gender differences.
- Feldhahn claims to be a "Harvard-educated researcher," but her degree is in public policy, not social science research or survey design. In the first edition of her book, she admitted that she had tremendous trouble with her statistics class; this is omitted from the updated edition.

SPREADS HARMFUL GENDER STEREOTYPES WITHOUT ALLOWING FOR NUANCE

- Equates "this is how men are" with "God made men this way, so women must adapt," such as in the way she frames men's "hard-wiring" as responsible for men's struggles, attitudes, and at times even actions.
- Warns that men have "mental photo files" of images of women that they have seen, and advises that women "accept his struggle with lust", supporting them rather than trying to change them (151). This, combined with the chapter that women need to keep up their appearance, feeds female insecurity.
- Portrays behaviors such as stalking an attractive woman through the aisles at Home Depot (135) or being preoccupied with a beautiful waitress while on a date with his wife (135) as normal for men.
- Declares that all men struggle with visually consuming women (131). Our survey of 20,000 women for our book *The Great Sex Rescue* found that this belief lowers women's libido, marital and sexual satisfaction, orgasm rates, and their trust in their husbands.
- Includes stereotypes not supported by research, such as men are internal processors, while women are external processors. States universal struggles like impostor syndrome as male issues. Ignores her own survey data to spread the stereotype that men have higher sex drives (ignored her female respondents who said it was mostly shared), thus treating women as unreliable narrators of their own experience when it does not agree with what men say.
- Portrays sex as something a woman "gives" a man (172) to boost his confidence, rather than something they enjoy together.



INSTRUCTS WOMEN TO ACCEPT POOR BEHAVIOR FROM HUSBANDS

- Explains that women shouldn't make an issue if men repeatedly fail to do things they promised (65), fail to fix a damaged kitchen wall (42), or refuse to care about the things his wife cares about (43) because if a husband ignore his wife's requests, he's showing "they just have different priorities." (42).
- Paints men's egos as the "most fragile thing on the planet", so women must ensure he never feels challenged. Giving a husband directions when he is lost undermines his confidence (27). Expressing an opinion different from your husband's conveys that you think he's stupid (24).
- Instead of warning women that fits of anger can be a sign of abuse, encourages women to blame themselves. "How do we know when we've crossed the disrespect line?...[T]here is one easy barometer: our men's anger." (18)
- Insinuates that the reason men have affairs at work or turn to porn is because a wife hasn't convinced her husband that "he's the greatest." (63)
- Tells women that even when they can't physically respond to sex, they should encourage their husbands enthusiastically, and "let your words be heart words—reassuring, affirming, adoring." (121) No instruction is given on how to tell a husband what she needs to feel pleasure.
- Fails to describe helpful ways to address problematic marriage dynamics, but instead advises women to concentrate on "verbally praising the positives." (45)

HEALTHY SEXUALITY RUBRIC SCORE: 11/48*

INFIDELITY & LUST: 5/16 | PLEASURE 3/16 | MUTUALITY 3/16

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WHAT WOMEN HAVE SAID

- "Based on this book, men are weak, insecure creatures that need their women to build up their self-esteem and look hot all the time. The most offensive part was about men being visually wired...[T]hey keep a memory file of all the hot women they have seen in their entire lives. So, are all women just doomed to live with a needy man-child that thinks about other women all the time?...I would rather be alone." **Amazon reviewer**
- "I followed what she said about not saying what you need/what feels good in bed to protect his "tender heart." I endured years of pain and vaginismus, along with a heartbroken husband who knew something was off, but I refused to say what until I couldn't stand it anymore." **Social Media Commenter**
- "Used it in my marriage and it only made it worse. He absolutely loved everything I did from this book but it was emotionally exhausting. I could not constantly emotionally regulate my husband. If I had a bad day he was upset because I was not understanding his needs. It literally made him a large child." **Amazon reviewer**
- "The only time I ever felt insecure about my marriage was after reading this book. I never questioned my husband's faithfulness (and he's never given me a reason to) but this book caused me to believe that he was one moment away from cheating at any time. Let me be clear, he's always been faithful. Always. Never even considered or wanted anything else but me. But after reading this book I spiraled into a season of doubt like never before. I wish I had just talked to him about it, but I took what she said as truth." **G.D., Social Media Commenter**

SYNOPSIS OF FINDINGS

Based on problematic survey data and outdated research, *For Women Only* presents a picture of marriage that burdens women with the responsibility for preserving men's "fragile egos" rather than creating healthy marriage dynamics. Instead of looking at how some of our struggles may be culturally conditioned or a result of sin, and seeing how one can act as iron sharpening iron to point a husband to look more like Christ (Romans 8:29), women are encouraged to accept men's bad behaviors and not ask for anything for themselves—even pleasure in bed.



INSTEAD OF FOR WOMEN ONLY, CHOOSE...

The Great Sex Rescue (Gregoire, Lindenbach & Sawatsky); The Making of Biblical Womanhood (Beth Allison Barr); Boundaries in Marriage (Cloud & Townsend); The Emotionally Healthy Woman (Gerri Scuzzero).