ForeWord Reviews

SELF-HELP

What Women Wish You Knew about Dating: A Single Guy's Guide to Romantic Relationships
Stephen W. Simpson
Baker Books
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Directed to the Christian man seeking a mate, this book can serve a wider audience. Its psychology, values, and wit will appeal to men and women of many persuasions. A psychotherapist and theologian, husband and father, Simpson wants to help readers who are discouraged, insecure, and even clueless, as he once was. Regarding sex as a blessing, he wants its full expression reserved until marriage, but not by pretending it doesn't exist. Developing real intimacy at several levels—intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical—should be both a pleasure and a challenge.

Transformation from "guy" to "man" comes first. The five qualities of manliness are passion, confidence, daring, humility, and responsibility. Unlike guys, men can admit weakness, take risks, deal with rejection, and be passionate. A man respects his date without fearing or worshipping her. To do all this requires having a life. Depending on his partner for his purpose or self-esteem burdens her and won't work for long.

Freud famously admitted that he did not know what a woman wants. In the century since he began treating neurotics in Vienna, a sexual flood has spread over the world. This is not enlightenment, however, and therapist Simpson is rightly concerned about men turning to Internet porn as consolation for romantic failure. The problem, like Freud's, is not primarily sexual, but how to be the perfect complement to a chosen person. Simpson gets basic. He provides detailed instructions on hand-holding and the first kiss on dates two and three, respectively. Boring? Not to the reader in search of the unknown. Learning when and how to touch—not an end in itself—follows and enhances emotional contact. That requires accurate empathy—knowing or finding out where the other person is at the moment. Without empathy Freud's question can never be answered. With empathy, and a fluid mix of confidence and humility, patience and passion, a motivated student can find out.

Simpson consulted with his wife, whom he met at twenty-eight, on all details. He expects the reader to engage in real conversation with an attractive woman for an hour before he

asks for a date. He insists on taking “no” (or its equivalent) for an answer. A matter of basic respect, this corrects for the self-delusion that her “no” means “maybe.” If it really does, she needs to change.

For those enjoying a good relationship, much of this book would seem elementary, even off-putting. Yet therapists and pastoral counselors keep busy with stalled seekers who deserve respect and help. This book meets a real need with wit, warmth, and wisdom.

E. James Lieberman