

DAVID DOUGLAS DIAMONDS: JESUS AND JEWELRY

# CHRISTIAN LIVING

JAN/FEB 2005

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**Shaunti Feldhahn**  
Unraveling the Mysteries of Men



Author Shaunti Feldhahn

*What kind of book would the pastor of a 14,000-member church in Atlanta purchase for every woman in his congregation?*

Pastor Andy Stanley of Northpoint Community Church in Alpharetta, Georgia, one of the largest churches in the country, read Shaunti Feldhahn's latest book, *For Women Only: What You Need to Know about the Inner Lives of Men* (Multnomah), and asked her to hold a brief seminar for his staff. After seeing how it revolutionized their thinking – and how encouraging and liberating some of the book's truths were to even the husbands, he ordered 7,000 copies to give to every woman in his church. He also invited Shaunti to speak to the church, which also includes several satellite locations via video, as part of his series on "Exposed." (The other invited speaker is Michael Leahy of Bravehearts.net, a ministry that helps men addicted to Internet pornography.) But why would Andy Stanley consider such subjects so cutting-edge for his people? What revelations does this book contain?

We interviewed the author to gain some insight into her findings, her background, and her mission.

*Unraveling the*  
**MYSTERIES**  
*of* **MEN**  
by Lisa A. Rice



**CL:** *Shaunti, how can you, as a woman, know about the inner lives of men?*

**Shaunti:** I actually believe this is a book that only a woman could write because it's all about the things we women just don't 'get' about guys... and only a woman can recognize what women just don't get! And frankly, because of what I found, I raise some difficult challenges and some suggestions for women, that they just might not hear or accept from a male author.

**CL:** *How did you come up with the idea for the book?*

**Shaunti:** I was doing some research for my second novel, *Lights of Tenth Street*, which is set here in Atlanta, by the way. One of the main characters was a good Christian husband and father who came face to face with some difficult situations. I didn't know what a man would be thinking in those cases, so I set out to interview a bunch of men. My husband and I would go out with other couples, and I'd describe a particular scene and ask the guy what he'd be thinking in that situation. When the guys told me, pretty soon my mouth would drop open, the other wives' mouths would drop open, and we'd be asking, "That's what you're thinking?!" There was so much we obviously didn't understand. I then cast a wider net, interviewing men all over town, even the strangers behind the

counter at Starbucks or the security guard at Costco. Pretty soon I had a journal full of unbelievable revelations about men, and I knew this good information couldn't stop with just creating a character. There had to be a much wider audience.

In the summer of 2003, while walking the hallway at the Christian Bookseller's Convention here in Atlanta, I started praying about the subject. I said, "Lord, it's a shame to stop here... and suddenly into my head came the title. I said, "Oooh, that's good." Everyone was excited. I did a ton more research and started to realize that a lot of women wouldn't believe my findings! So I hired a professional survey company to see whether what I was finding was real. Every one of my findings and theories was borne out in the national survey. It was, to me, an enormous paradigm shift from my earlier thinking. I contracted with Multnomah, for whom I'd already written several books, and they instantly saw the merit of a book that would open women's eyes to the reality of how men think and feel; what they really need versus what we're assuming they need.

**CL:** *Can you share some specifics? What do men really need?*

**Shaunti:** Here's one of the biggest surprises I bring out in the book. We, as women, spend a lot of time trying to make our men feel loved. We do nice things for them and

say nice words to them, and generally pour out love the best we can. However, feeling our love is not usually a man's greatest need. His greatest need is actually respect. We can go overboard showing love, but if we're questioning his decisions and making him feel belittled, whether in private or in public, our man will feel disrespected.

We also have this idea that love must be unconditional, but respect must be earned. This is actually unbiblical. In fact, in that great passage on marriage in Ephesians 5, over and over, it tells husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church, because God knows that is what we women need. And over and over it tells wives to respect their husbands. Never once does it tell wives to love their husbands. Why? Because God knows we'll do it naturally. Instead, he tells us to respect them. Our job is to treat our husbands with respect, affirmation, and admiration, even when they haven't earned it... just as we want them to love us unconditionally when we don't necessarily deserve it. When we do that, we're encouraging our husbands to be the men God intended them to be.

**CL:** *Your book talks about the subject of monetary provision. What did you learn about this need in a man?*

**Shaunti:** We all know that men want to be providers. But what we don't realize is that it's not just a matter of "wanting to." It's a burden and compulsion that goes so deep in the heart of man, that even if we made more than enough money to support our family's lifestyle, it would make no difference whatsoever to the man's feeling

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of a burden to provide. I can't tell you how many men – nice, sensitive, liberated men – said, “I love my wife, but I can't depend on her to provide. That's my job.”

I also hope that each woman will see her husband's work job habits in a new light. For instance, many men work long hours. My husband did. I'd be frustrated and upset, but he was actually saying, “I love you” with these long hours – which, of course, equated to more money for our family. So he thought he was saying “I love you” and I was criticizing him for it! Men have this sense that the ultimate responsibility rests on them, and they definitely feel this sense of uncertainty and burden in this economy. Men are taking unfulfilling jobs out of their sense of desire to provide, and we need to be absolutely supportive. The appropriate response is our sympathy, not our criticism. Of course there's a balance, but we're unbalanced in the wrong direction if we're criticizing.

*CL: What was your most surprising revelation?*

**Shaunti:** It had to do with sex. We women tend to think of sex as a physical need, whereas if you as a woman have been pulled on by little hands all day, sleep seems like a physical need! And when you compare sex to sleep that way, often, sleep is going to win! Instead, it changes everything when a woman realizes that for a man, feeling desired by his wife gives him an emotional sense of confidence and well being in the rest of his life, and the physical need part of it is actually a relatively small part of the equation. A man can be feeling like he's messing up at work, he's got financial problems, the kids are fussy, and the house is a wreck, but if he feels that his wife desires him and affirms him in bed, he can face the rest of those problems with confidence, and even conquer the world.

Conversely, when he gets rejected, or feels that she's only responding out of duty, he'll get a nagging sense of depression or loneliness, making him actively need to

search out other areas where he can at least feel like a man – affirmed and alive. Many men turn to work and sports for fulfillment, and some, unfortunately, turn to areas they shouldn't. When you understand how critical it is for a man to feel desired and affirmed, it's much easier to understand why a husband might have a really hard time resisting the admiring young secretary at work. It makes him feel like a man. We women often don't realize, but we must realize, that in the department of physical intimacy with our husbands, we hold the key. We can spur him on to joy and well-being, or we can drag him down with depression. What a delight to be able to give our husbands that gift of confidence! Suddenly, when you look at it that way, sex and sleep don't seem comparable at all.

*CL: This is such good information, but there doesn't seem to be a lot out there on these topics. Have you found some good venues to share your findings?*

**Shaunti:** My publisher has arranged tons of radio and television interviews. I recently taped some shows on James Robinson's Life Today, Family Life with Dennis and Barbara Rainey, Moody Radio, and others. The response has been overwhelming. I had a radio interview last night with a host in South Florida, and she said, “I'm going to open the phone lines now.” Then whoah! Immediately the switchboard was jammed, and it stayed jammed for the full hour. There were not enough lines to meet the demand.

*CL: How did you start writing? Did you have a background in marriage and family counseling?*

**Shaunti:** Not at all. I always tell people right up front, that I am not a psychiatrist, and wrote this book simply as an observer giving average guys the chance to share their hearts with us. And writing at all is something God just drew me into after years of going in a completely different



*Lisa A. Rice, CLM Staff Writer,  
interviews Shaunti Feldhahn*

direction, though I found out later that all my background and skill set was a perfect set-up for this eventual crazy calling! I grew up in the D.C. area, committed my life to Christ as a senior in college on a Catholic retreat, worked on Capitol Hill a few years, and then went to Harvard. I received a Masters in Public Policy and thought I'd eventually become involved in some sort of elected office. I worked as an analyst on Wall Street for the New York Fed, and had to do a little analysis on Y2K before the year 2000 rollover. When I moved to Atlanta with my husband in 1998, I was disturbed that the only folks in the Christian community who were talking about Y2K were shouting "grab the dog, the shotgun and head to the hills," which didn't look like Jesus to me!

Through a totally miraculous series of events, I ended up feeling that God wanted me to write a book about the Y2K bug and what the balanced Christian response should be – and although I'd never published anything before, God had a publisher all arranged. The book ended up being the #1 bestseller on the Christian market best-seller list for four months, and even hit the secular bestseller lists from so many sales out of secular bookstores!

My next two books were actually novels. The Veritas Conflict deals with spiritual warfare at Harvard, and Lights of Tenth Street is about the choice Christians have to make to show the unconditional, nonjudgmental love of Jesus to those who are hurting, even those who may make poor life choices.

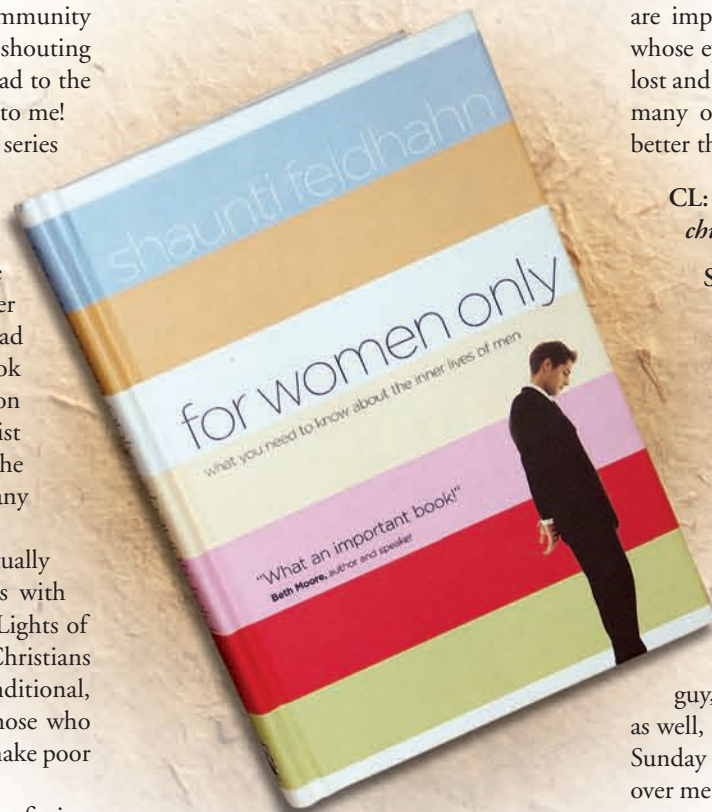
All of my works, though some are fiction and some are non-fiction, fall into a twofold life calling: to equip the Body of Christ for ministry to a hurting world; and to be a voice of compassionate Truth to those who don't know the Lord.

**CL:** *Tell us about your work with the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.*

**Shaunti:** I write two columns for the paper: an online liberal/conservative debate, and a solo column in the paper on Wednesdays. It's a unique, unusual opportunity for an evangelical Christian to have an opinion column in a major newspaper. I get to write about anything I feel is a critical issue in our culture, including the presidential election. I talk about very critical crossroads issues for our nation, such as abortion and the

**“I believe we as Christians have a responsibility to do far more than we are doing.”**

**- SHAUNTI FELDHAHN**



protection of traditional marriage. We're at a cultural crossroads now where there's a struggle going on between those who believe in absolute, biblical principles of morality, and those that believe everything is relative and our understanding should "evolve" over time.

The reason this cultural crossroads is so important now is that in many areas, there's no turning back. Once you decide, for example, that the gay lifestyle is morally acceptable, and that the government should legalize and endorse that union, you can't reverse that decision. People will build their lives around their legal union. What are we going to do five years later if we decide it's wrong? It'll be too late. It's done.

But the issue is larger here. I believe

we as Christians have a responsibility to do far more than we've currently done to reach out to those we actively disagree with, showing them the unconditional love of Jesus. In the end, it's a heart issue. In many ways it's like the abortion issue. We can and should stand up for life, and try to roll back the terrible policy decisions that have made unborn babies' lives so cheap. But our goal will never really be achieved unless we somehow reduce demand for abortions and foster heart change.

There needs to be a "both/and" approach. Both standing up for principles we believe are important, and reaching out to those whose eyes are simply blinded, and are just lost and in need of the Lord. Unfortunately, many of us have done the former much better than the latter.

**CL:** *Tell us about your family and your church family.*

**Shaunti:** I have an incredible husband – the best in the world – who for the last five years has been running a start-up technology business, World2one, and yet finds time to be a full-time, involved and loving husband and father. We have two adorable children – a four-year-old girl and a two-year-old son, who are immense blessings to us.

My church is the **Atlanta Vineyard, pastored by Johnny Crist**. He's just an incredible guy, and has been amazingly supportive as well, calling me up before the church on Sunday when a book comes out, to pray over me just as he would a missionary being sent overseas. I have a committed prayer team from my church, which prays over my writing and the warfare surrounding some of these issues. Since our biological families live far away, we feel that our church is truly family too. It's a blessing to have the support, love and prayers at the Vineyard.

**CL:** *Thank you for sharing your book, your heart, and your mission with us today. It's been a blessing to our magazine, and – on a personal note -- a fun blessing for me to interview my best friend. God bless your endeavors for the kingdom!*

**Shaunti:** Thanks so much – it's such an honor to have the opportunity to do this. And what you guys are doing with Christian Living is absolutely wonderful, and I pray it is richly blessed.