

Dare To Date, Aukelien van Abbema

Published January 2017 (SPCK)

Interview with Aukelien van Abbema

Aukelien, tell us a bit about yourself?

Specialising in Emotional Focussed Therapy couples counselling, I'm a licensed counsellor currently working in the Netherlands. My main work is with couples and single people working out the relationship issues they face. For example, single people come to me because they want a long-term relationship and they want to discern why that hasn't happened so far, and what they can change in their behaviour or ways of thinking in order to maybe change events in their dating life.

So Dare to Date, how does that fit in?

Dare to Date was written originally in Dutch based on the Dating Course I developed in my church, Crossroads International Amsterdam, seven years ago. I noticed I was not the only single person struggling with the issues of dating and relationships, and not the only Christian not satisfied with the 'answer': "just pray and wait". For me, praying and waiting was seemingly safe but also very much out of character. I like to do things, actively solve the problems I face.

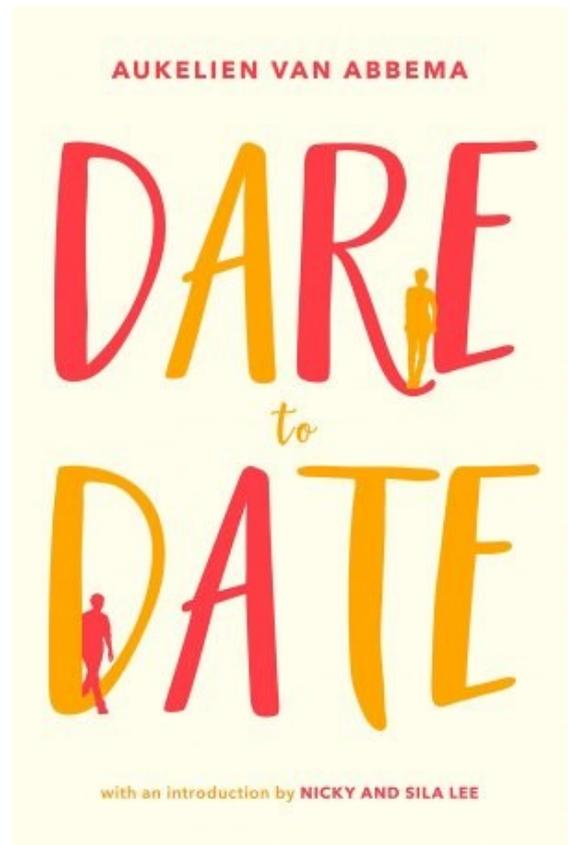
Meanwhile, in my professional development as a therapist, I learned a thing or two about fear, anxiety and how to solve related issues. I also read Tim Keller's 'Meaning of Marriage' and Henry Cloud's 'How to get a date worth keeping'. Both books influenced my thinking profoundly on the matter of how God views our single status and how dating can be done in a Godly, healthy way. Those books freed me of my issues with actively looking for a partner.

Seven years later, what are the lessons you've learned?

Well, seven years later I find myself married and the mother of a son. So things have changed quite a bit! I've also been introduced to Sue Johnson's method of couples counselling, Emotionally Focussed Therapy ('Hold me tight' is her best known book on the subject). This has shaped me as a counsellor in such a way that I see 'single issues' now much more as 'relationship issues'. Most singles who want to be in a relationship have relational issues rather than singleness issues. Most teaching for singles focuses on how to do the single life well, rather than how to do dating well. Which I think is a major missed opportunity. Because most singles have figured out single life quite well and have their friends and social life and are reasonably happy. But the vast majority of them would rather be married.

So what advice do you have for single people who would rather be married?

Dare to date! It's really that simple, in a way. A lot of single people seem to fall into one of two groups: the ones who have dates but can't seem to find 'the one'. Those are the ones that most often have issues with their concept of 'the one'. They are looking for this idealised person, or type, and they ignore everyone who seems to them to not be an option. They always date the



same type and always end up miserable. The other group is the group that doesn't date (much) at all. They mostly have fear-related issues. They are too afraid to ask someone out, show initiative or take a chance. They are a bit easier to help than the first group, because once they start dating they usually have fun and often find someone within a year or two.

Which group were you in? 😊

I was definitely in the second group (although I do understand the issues the first group is facing). I was too afraid to say yes to anyone, but I also had these set images in my head about how my husband-to-be was supposed to look, dress, talk and even be educated. This fixed mindset certainly didn't help. Luckily, my husband broke through those stereotypes. But he couldn't have done that if I hadn't learned in the years before I met him how to date with an open mind and an open heart....

Dare to Date can be bought at Eden: <http://www.eden.co.uk/shop/dare-to-date-4435509.html>

Thank you ever so much Aukelien! We're sure the book will be a huge help for lots of people!