

Be Careful What You Watch

Today's Christian women are bombarded by the effects of feminism, whether they realize it or not. Humorous sitcoms such as *King of Queens*, *Everybody Loves Raymond*, and *Sex and the City* are invading our marriages and thoughts. We become sucked into shows like *Desperate Housewives*, sitting on our couches intrigued by their lives, then horrified and stunned when a friend calls us to share her recent decision to leave her husband. If we can open our eyes to what the media is pulling us into, then we can prepare a counter-attack with God's Word and principles so we aren't left wondering how the humor of Hollywood's divas became our marriage's destruction.

In a broad sense, feminism is defined as a philosophy that focuses on gender equality and women's rights. It has progressed from the suffrage movement of the nineteenth century, which provided women the right to vote, to today's liberating of women from any "social norm" and encouraging them to accept their status as equal, if not even superior, to men. The issue is not women receiving valuable rights; it is that biblical standards are becoming blurred by the "social norms." This article is just going to focus on how feminism has invaded the media and blurred our understanding of marriage and roles as Christian women. If we do not open our eyes to where Satan is deceiving us and twisting the truth, we will find ourselves savoring the forbidden fruit, even declaring that it is good to eat!

Let's begin by continuing the theme of the conniving serpent in the garden and look at one of television's most popular sitcoms: *Desperate Housewives*. The opening clip even shows the stars of the show in a garden, with their hands holding bright red apples as a snake falls from the tree behind them. Their mischievous grins portray a feeling of satisfaction with their sinful behavior, and a powerful, sexy demeanor follows them into every scene, ready to satisfy their desires. It is true that victory does not always follow them and that they end up paying for their bad choices, but the underlying theme indicates a self-revolving world in which these women will do whatever it takes to satisfy their own desires. This promotes that lifestyle to viewers, who watch the gratification taking place. The idea is this: if you're not happy with your spouse, sleep with the teenage gardener (Gabrielle). If you feel unloved, control the men around you with your voluptuous body (Edie). If you are not good at being a mom, it is okay to let your teenage daughter tell you what you should do (Susan). Even though you have great children and a loving spouse, you won't feel satisfied being a stay-at-home mom, so you should become successful in a new career, or find your thrills in a harmless male friendship (Lynette). If you go to the www.imdb.com website, the plot keywords for *Desperate Housewives* include some of the following: "failing marriage, single parent, bisexual, divorce, cults, gay son, blackmail, irreverent, murder investigation, battle of the sexes, extramarital affair." Sounds like a perfect show to sit down with a bowl of popcorn and pizza, doesn't it? Yet, it won three Golden Globes! Why? It feeds on our sinful desires and says that it's okay to do whatever you want because you deserve to be happy.

Please do not disregard this article as the tirade of a fundamentalist entertainment prohibitionist. I enjoy coming home, turning on the T.V. and relaxing after a day of work. In the past, I will admit to have watched these popular shows, intrigued and enjoying the humorous dialogues within them. I am thankful for my loving husband, who protected me by bringing to my attention my addiction to these dangerous shows. My intention in this article is not to persuade a fast of secular media, but rather to

open our eyes to what is in front of us, and discuss how we can use the media to make biblical standards more defined in our society and in our lives.

According to Kilbourne & Jhally, 2000, the average person in the United States is exposed to over 3,000 advertisements per day. This makes it especially important for us to be aware of what advertisements are contradicting God's standards and what our children are receiving mentally through these commercials. Many families find that the only time they have together is in front of the television. Why not take that time as a teaching opportunity when you see a commercial or observe your children watching a show that subverts God's standards? You could ask questions like, "Do you think they believe in God?"; "What does the Bible say about helping others?"; "Do you think it is important to have expensive things?" This will not only instigate dialogue between your children, but it will give you valuable insight into what they are really thinking about what is important in life. You can also help them to connect verses in the Bible to what the advertisements are displaying.

Let's return to the topic of feminism's intrusion into the Christian home. As you recall, the goal of feminism was to empower women. Genesis is clear that God created man and woman both in His image. They were equal in value, distinct in roles. The shift of feminism has taken the sanctity of the woman's role to help her husband and twisted it to convey that women are superior to men.

Can you think of any popular sitcoms that portray the wife as superior and the husband as stupid and incompetent? How about King of Queens, where the husband sits on the couch and eats, while the wife has a successful career in which she indulges in shopping and has little desire to have children? She says "do it," and her husband obeys her. In Everybody loves Raymond, the mother-in-law rules the roost, Deborah constantly berates her husband, and Raymond is viewed as a failure when he is in charge of taking care of the children. How about the Simpsons? Marge is the ever-loving wife whose husband, Homer, is a complete idiot and never does anything right. You can even go back to our childhood days of reading the Berenstain Bears books, which portray the mama bear laying down the rules and the papa bear as the child who breaks them. Sitcoms that portray fatherhood and manhood as positive attributes like the Andy Griffith Show have been replaced with Married with Children and Two and Half Men. Is it any wonder why the family unit is becoming dysfunctional?

While it will be difficult to change the direction of Hollywood, encouraging them to return to a healthier mode of entertainment, there are things that you can do now to protect your family from absorbing the culture's ideologies. First, recognize a lie when you see or hear it. To identify the difference between a lie and truth, you must know the truth, right? This will only be found within the pages of the Bible. God's standards do not change with culture. When we understand what God's standards are, we can move towards them. In a fallen world, however, that becomes difficult and messy, because we all strive against pleasing ourselves and pleasing God. When someone hurts us, does that give us the right to abandon what we know we should do in light of seeking justice for ourselves? When our marriages become difficult and our children seem out of control, do we give up and seek the easy way out? Do we indulge in romance novels, soap operas, and television shows that make our minds wander to an unrealistic way of life, leaving us feeling unsatisfied with what God has so richly blessed us with?

Every day we must fight against the 3,000 advertisements that tell us to become independent, express the diva goddess within, explore our sexual freedom, redefine our sexual identity, become beautiful and perfect so that we will be loved, and discover that there are no differences between men and women. We must also replace those images with godly principles that remind us to become dependent upon the Lord; die to ourselves and seek to serve others; enjoy sexuality within marriage; decorate ourselves with the beautiful qualities of humility, love, and gentleness; and embrace the fact that God created us male and female, equal in the image of God, different in roles.