

THE FEMINIST INFLUENCE

I. Introduction

- A. In the secular realm, the focus is on abortion rights and homosexual rights. In the church, the focus is on equality of the husband and wife and women free to follow God's leading in any sort of ministry – pastor, elder, teaching men.
- B. For today's workshop, I want to give you a very brief critique of five books, but I want to spend most of the time giving you practical counseling tips to help women influenced by the secular and/or Christianized feminist philosophy.

II. Book Critiques

A. *The Feminine Mystique*ⁱ

1. Written by Betty Friedan, a young wife and mother of three in 1963.
2. Friedan is obviously searching for something to give meaning to her life.
3. Studied graduate psychology under psychologist Erik Erikson. Friedan borrowed from Erikson's idea of the teen "identity crisis" and in her book, her search for meaning and significance became the woman's right to mature to "full human identity" (and of course, that would be accomplished through her own education and career).
4. Friedan is not only an unbeliever but she is an atheist. She was named humanist of the year in 1975. Friedan died in 2006.
5. Friedan as well as Erikson were greatly influenced by Abraham Maslow and the words *significance, identity, and self-actualization* frequent her book.
6. Quote from *The Feminine Mystique*:
7. Friedan's book took America by storm. Men became chauvinist pigs and women became either freedom fighters or doormats. Her philosophy even intimidated men into being passive in their God-given role as the leader in the family and the church today (the Bible believing church) is in confusion over the role of women.

B. *What Paul Really Said About Women*ⁱⁱ

1. John Bristow is a Disciples of Christ pastor in Seattle, Washington.
2. Subtitle of the book: An Apostle's Liberating Views on Equality in Marriage, Leadership, and, Love.
3. Presupposition #1: **The idea of a wife being submissive to her husband is a consequence of the fall of man** (Gen.3). Therefore, they are to be mutually submissive (Ephesians 5:21).ⁱⁱⁱ Bristow says that women were equal in authority before the fall, submission was a consequence of the fall, but now "in Christ" women are no longer under submission, but free.
4. Presupposition 2: **submission equates with inferiority.**

- 5. Concludes that in Eph.5 – *hupotasso* and *agapao* are parallel words meaning: “be responsive to the needs of.”^{iv} *Hupotasso* means to be “ranked under in military order” and *agapao* is a self-sacrificing love.
- 6. Presupposition #3: **believes that women are called by God to minister as pastors.** Bristow does not deal with the text of Scriptures in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus on the qualifications for elder/pastor (husband of one wife) but concludes that women are to be free to minister however they feel led.

C. *Ten Lies the Church Tells Women*^v

- 1. J. Lee Grady is an ordained minister and award-winning journalist, and editor of *Charisma* magazine.
- 2. Presumes: **if women are to be subordinate they must be inferior and the man will most likely be abusive.**
- 3. He does not exegete the Scriptures but to prove his point he tells many stories of women who were or are in ministry.
- 4. Goes so far as to tell women **not** to obey their husbands if their husbands are keeping them from going into ministry, they have to obey the Holy Spirit.

D. *Beyond Authority and Submission* by Rachel Green Miller, 2019^{vi}

- 1. Miller is a conservative Presbyterian.
- 2. Her research is flawed.
- 3. Gives lip service to the idea of submission but obviously bristles at the idea.
- 4. Almost zero tolerance for those who take submission to their husbands seriously and believe it is their joy to serve God and their husband in that way.

E. *Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*^{vii}

- 1. Edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem
- 2. Contains a wealth of information (566 pages) to refute the books and typical feminist teaching about the role of men and women at home and in the church.
- 3. Even if you don’t read the entire book, it would be a good resource to have.

III. Counseling Tips

A. Specific tips

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| 1. Realize that women do not have to be in full blown rebellion against men or card carrying member of the National Organization for Women to have been influenced by this philosophy. Most women have been influenced even if they are committed Christians. She may say things like, “I’m tired of staying home and talking to little kids all day, I want to do something for myself.” |
| 2. Counter this wrong philosophy by turning their focus from themselves and the raw deal they perceive they are getting to a focus to God. Romans 12:2. Suggest she think, “I’m going to do my work heartily as to the Lord and I am choosing to consider my family as “more important than myself.” (Phil.2:3 and Col.3:23). |
| 3. Listen for statements like, “What about me?” “What about my needs?” “What about my rights?” |

“There is something missing in my life.”

4. Be prepared to give a brief, simple explanation debunking the “needs” thinking. Example: draw Maslow’s hierarchy of needs on the board. Explain that it is a psychological theory developed by Adler and Maslow. They believed you must have your underlying needs met first, before you can become a self-actualized person (mature, reaching out to others). It’s not true, you can be sinned against horribly all your life and still give God glory and in spite of other’s sin become a mature, kind, loving, joyful Christian serving others.

4. Homework: Jay Adams’ book, *Self-Love, Self-Image, and Self-Esteem* and/or Martha Peace’s booklet, *Psychologized Man* (which is also chapter three in *Attitudes of a Transformed Heart*).

5. Teach them basic doctrine: (1) Women are not inferior to men in God’s view (Gals. 3:28; Gen.1:27). It is a lie to believe they are victims when in reality the wife and mother’s role is a wonderful and fulfilling option for them. (2) Their roles are different. (1 Cor.11:3, 7-9). Being a biblically submissive wife (obey unless her husband asks her to sin) is a high and holy calling for the wife.

6. Often wives put themselves first (Phil.2:3-8). A good homework book would be Wayne Mack’s *Maximum Impact*.

7. The wife may be a servant to her family or her church family but she may resent it and be bitter. (Proverbs 31:27) Instead she should be grateful and thankful. I recommend Lou Priolo’s book *Bitterness*.

8. After gathering data concerning specific incidents where a wife feels taken advantage of, teach her to biblically deal with each incident. For example, what to do if her husband is selfish or her children are lazy and disrespectful. Homework – *The Excellent Wife book and Study Guide*.^{viii}

9. Homework for those confused about the role of women in the church: assign John MacArthur’s book, *Different by Design*^{ix} or Alexander Strauch’s book, *Equal yet Different*.^x

10. To counter the “you deserve better than this” mentality, exhort her to put on humility. Give her hope, “God gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6). Encourage her to pray and ask God to help her understand and have a heart to be used by Him for His glory. For homework, Stuart Scott has a booklet entitled *From Pride to Humility*^{xi} and there is a chapter on humility in Martha Peace’s *Attitudes of a Transformed Heart* book.^{xii}

11. Help her see the beam in her own eye by asking questions such as, “What do you think God wants you to work on?” or “What do you think you have done wrong?” For homework assign the “Put-Off and Put-On Dynamic” Bible study by Martha Peace (available free from Martha’s blog site: marthapeacetew@blogspot.com and also in the addendum in the *Attitudes of a Transformed Heart* book.^{xiii}

12. If she is rebellious towards those in authority over her or against God, teach her that rebellion is a very wicked sin. 1 Sam.15:23 If her rebellion is against her husband, point out the contrast with the “holy women of old who hoped in God” who adorned themselves by being submissive to their husbands.” (1 Peter 3:5)

13. Teach her the meaning of a “gentle and quiet spirit” – a woman who is not given to fear or anger and does not dispute with God (1 Peter 3:4). For homework, Martha Peace’s new book coming out near the end of 2020 or beginning of 2021, *Biblical Counseling in Practice*.^{xiv}

14. Teach her or give her homework on the biblical view of authority/submission. Chapters 11-14 in <i>The Excellent Wife</i> book.
15. She may believe it is a virtue to <i>not</i> let someone dominate her. Explain that the real virtue is to deny herself. Matthew 16:24; Romans 12:1
16. You may need to teach her when it is not appropriate for her to be submissive – when he is asking her to sin. For homework, Martha Peace’s ACBC lecture “Misperceptions Concerning Biblical Submission.” ^{xv}
17. Show her the example of the Apostle Paul who considered himself to be a “bond slave” of Christ. Romans 1:1. She should have the same attitude. Also show her the glorious example of our Lord Jesus “who did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped” (Phil.2:6; Mark 10:45).
18. Teach her the glorious truth of the sovereignty of God. Romans 9
19. Teach her that it is a sin to use unbiblical means to manipulate those in authority over her so that she can have her own way. Examples are tears, begging, pouting, anger, threats, and falsely accusing them. Pro. 26:4-5
20. Do not sugar coat the role of the woman in the home or in the church. (However, you may have to work up to it gradually!) Many Christian women are ignorant and have never been taught, so begin with the basics of the role of men and women. Hebrews 13:17
21. If her husband is a Christian, a wife must understand that her husband’s ministry is to come first. The woman is to be the glory of the man. (1 Cor.11:7).

B. Comparison Chart comparing the feminist beliefs, how we have been influenced, and how Scripture tells us we are to change.^{xvi}

Feminist Beliefs	How We have been Influenced?	How Scripture Tells us we are to Change?
“The feminine mystique permits, even encourages women to ignore the question of their own identity. The mystique says that they can answer the question ‘Who am I?’ by saying, ‘I am Tom’s wife...’” ^{xvii}	“I think my pastor suppresses women with the narrow views he has on their roles. He uses the Bible to back up his teaching but, after all, this is the twenty-first century!”	When I think about “Who am I?” the answer is -- a woman created by God in His image. My responsibility as God’s creature is to glorify Him and serve Him as He desires. This is often in the biblical role of wife and mother. Whether I ever marry or not, I am to use the spiritual gifts God has given me and use them within the Scriptural role of a woman.”
“We can no longer ignore that voice within women that says, ‘I want something more than my husband and my children and my home.’” ^{xviii}	“There’s got to be more to life than cleaning house. I’m going to do something for myself! My family will survive.”	Counter this wrong philosophy by turning your focus from yourself to God (Romans 12:2). For example, “I’m going to ‘do my work heartily as to the Lord’ and I am choosing to consider my family as ‘more important than myself’ (Philippians 2:3; Colossians 3:23).”

<p>“It is my thesis that the Victorian culture did not permit women to accept or gratify their basic need to grow and fulfill their potentialities as human beings, a <i>need</i> which is not solely defined by their sexual role [as a wife and mother].”^{xix}</p>	<p>We think and say things like, “What about me? What about my needs? What about my rights? There is something missing in my life. I need my space.”</p>	<p>Understand that the “needs” theory is unbiblical. It is unnecessary, unsettling, and unbiblical to think in these terms. The Scripture tells us that “God has given us <i>everything we need</i> pertaining to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3), emphasis added). So, we should be thinking in terms of loving God and loving others and not in terms of our needs (Matthew 22:37-40).</p>
<p>“Many psychologists, including Freud, have made the mistake of assuming from observations of women who did not have the education and the freedom to play their full part in the world, that it was woman’s essential nature to be passive, conformist, dependent, fearful, childlike...”^{xx}</p>	<p>“Women are not inferior to men. I have just as much right to my opinion and way as he does.”</p>	<p>“There is no partiality with God – whether we are male or female (Galatians 3:28). However, that does not mean I always have a right to express or demand my opinion. My responsibility is to be under my husband’s authority (1 Corinthians 11:3). God knows better than anyone how I can best glorify Him.”</p>
<p>“Marriage has the same effect as slavery...”^{xxi}</p>	<p>Biblical submission of a wife to her husband is an outdated concept. Today, the emphasis in the church is on mutual submission.</p>	<p>“Being submissive to my husband unless he asks me to sin is a primary way that I can serve the Lord Jesus. This attitude may not be popular today but this is how God has chosen for me to glorify Him. It is a privilege to serve the Lord however He chooses. I am going to pray that my submission will shine as a light in a dark world” (Ephesians 5:22-24).</p>
<p>“Perhaps it is only a sick or immature society that chooses to make women “housewives,” not people. Perhaps it is only sick or immature men and women, unwilling to face the great challenges of society, who can retreat for long, without unbearable distress, into that thing-ridden house and make it the end of life itself.”^{xxii}</p>	<p>“I deserve better than this!”</p>	<p>“If I got what I really deserved, it would be death and hell (Romans 6:23). I am to serve the Lord graciously however He chooses. Part, but not all, of how I am to serve the Lord is by taking care of my family. What a privilege to spend my days training my children and caring for our greatest earthly asset, our house.”</p>
<p>“Who knows of the possibilities of love [that marriage will be better]</p>	<p>“Nobody is going to tell me that I can’t</p>	<p>“Lord, let my desire be more to please You and You have Your way</p>

<p>when men and women share not only children, home, and garden, not only the fulfillment of their biological roles, but the responsibilities and passions of the work that creates the human future and the full human knowledge of who they are?”^{xxiii}</p>	<p>work!”</p>	<p>in my life than it is for me to rebel against You by demanding my rights.”</p>
<p>“The feminine mystique has succeeded in burying millions of American women alive. There is no way for these women to break out of their comfortable concentration camps except by finally putting forth an effort...to help shape the future. Only by such a personal commitment to the future can American women break out of the housewife trap and truly find fulfillment as wives and mothers – by fulfilling their own unique possibilities as separate human beings.”^{xxiv}</p>	<p>“I have been asked to become the director of the Crisis Pregnancy Center. What a wonderful opportunity to serve the Lord! Even though my husband does not want me to, I believe God is calling me to this ministry. I must obey God rather than man!”</p>	<p>“If God wants me to be the director of the Crisis Pregnancy Center, He will change my husband’s heart (without my badgering or nagging him). It is more important that I be holy before the Lord by submitting graciously to my husband’s authority than it is that I become director of the pregnancy center (Ephesians 5:22).”</p>
<p>“Women, as well as men, can only find their identity in work that uses their full capacities.”^{xxv}</p>	<p>“Can you believe that our pastor won’t let my girlfriend teach the couples Sunday School class? How ridiculous! She is the best teacher in the entire church!”</p>	<p>“According to the Scriptures, women are not to “teach and exercise authority over the men” (1 Timothy 2:12-14). Even though my friend is a great teacher, my pastor is right. I need to support his decision.”</p>

IV. Conclusion

- A. We have all been and some of those ladies you will counsel have been influenced by the feminist philosophy. I tickles our ears and influences us to not be joyful and content to fulfill the roles that God has given us.
- B. As counselors, we should help women use their spiritual gifts but to do so within the biblical guidelines. In other words, use their gifts but do so God’s way. He is the highest authority. He is the Potter and we are His clay.

ⁱ Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique* (New York, New York: Dell Publishing, 1963).
ⁱⁱ Bristow, John. *What Paul Really Said about Women* (San Francisco, California: Harper San Francisco, 1991).
ⁱⁱⁱ For the best argument against the “mutual submission only” view see John Piper’s and Wayne Grudem’s end note on page 167-168 in their book *Recovering Bible Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991).
^{iv} *Ibid*, p.44
^v Grady, J. Lee. *Ten Lies the Church Tells Women* (Lake Mary, Florida: Charisma House, 2000).

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- vi Miller, Rachel Green. *Beyond Authority and Submission* (Phillipsburg, NJ, 2019).
- vii Piper, John and Grudem, Wayne. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books).
- viii Peace, Martha. *The Excellent Wife* (Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 1995).
- ix MacArthur, John. *Different By Design* (Chariot Victor Publishing, 1994).
- x Strauch, Alexander. *Equal Yet Different* (Littleton, Colorado: Lewis and Roth Publishers, 1999).
- xi Scott, Stuart. *From Pride to Humility* (Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2000).
- xii Peace, Martha. *Attitudes of a Transformed Heart*. (Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2002).
- xiii Ibid.
- xiv Peace, Martha. *Biblical Counseling in Practice* (Bemidji, MN. Focus Publishing, 2020).
- xv Martha Peace, "Misperceptions Concerning Biblical Submission" may be obtained from biblicalcounseling.com.
- xvi Peace, Martha. From her unpublished manuscript, *Problems Women Face Today*, 2004.
- xvii Friedan, p.71.
- xviii Friedan, p.32.
- xix Friedan, p.326.
- xx Friedan, p.326.
- xxi French, *The War Against Women*.
- xxii Friedan, p.232.
- xxiii Friedan, p.378.
- xxiv Friedan, p.336-337.
- xxv Friedan, p.336.