

# To Smile at the Future

## Proverbs 31

*“She is not afraid of the snow for her household, For all her household are clothed with scarlet.”*

Proverbs 31:21

*“Strength and dignity are her clothing, And she smiles at the future.”*

Proverbs 31:25

We are fearful about so many things in this life. Some fears are small fears, ones that we can ignore if we try or if we talk ourselves out of them. Other fears are more pervasive and seem to dominate and control our lives. There are different types of fear. There are fears that make us jump and there are fears that keep us up at night. There are the fears that stick with us all day every day at the back of our minds and give us a general sense of anxiety.

What is something that you fear?

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How do you usually deal with your fear?

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All of us will experience fear in our lives, and if we are not careful, we may find ourselves being characterized by that fear as it controls our daily lives. However, this is not God’s intention for our lives as women. Two verses specifically indicate that the Proverbs 31 woman is not fearful. Verse 21 says that “she is not afraid of the snow for her household” and verse 25 says that the woman is clothed with strength and dignity “and she smiles at the future.” Instead of fretting or being worried about what tomorrow will bring, she is doing what she can to prepare and then trusting God with the outcome.

The heart attitude behind this absence of fear is faith and focus.

When you lose focus, what are some of the lies that you hear inside you?

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We often fear when we lose our focus on the truth of God’s love and power, what we are to be doing in the here and now, and how we can be preparing practically for the future.

We also must be living lives of growing faith. We must hand over the things that trouble us one by one to the Lord, testing and proving His faithfulness, and as we do, we will become more trusting and accustomed to handling situations with faith.

Not only does fretting and worrying waste our time and energy, but really, we don’t have any reason to fear. When we know the One who is in control of the universe and recognize that He desires good for us (Jeremiah 29:11), we can live in full assurance and peace of mind.

We have also been told not to fear in Scripture. Romans 8:15 says that we have not been given a spirit of fear. Philippians 4 says “be anxious for nothing” and the following verses actually give us an alternative option to replace those thoughts of anxiety, fear, and worry. These verses say that we are to be thinking about things that are “true,...honorable..., right,...pure, ...lovely,...of good repute, ...any excellence and ...worthy of praise.” Actually, this replacement of thoughts is also often used as a technique in the field of psychology as part of cognitive therapy!

“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”

Philippians 4:8

We do not need to fear because we know personally the One who not only knows the future, but can control it, as well.

Filling our minds with the truth of scripture, through reading, studying, and memorization, is important to combat the fears that besiege us. As Charles Allen said, "The only way to expel one thought from our minds is by substituting a more powerful thought."

What is your greatest fear?

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What can you fill your mind with to help combat that fear?

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Why is it important for a woman to combat the fearfulness that she experiences? Partially because we are told not to be fearful and because it is an unnecessary waste of time and energy, but also because of the effect that fearfulness has on others. Whether it is contagious squeals during a scary movie or a worry that grows as it is passed along from person to person, fear is contagious, and we must be careful of what fears we are encouraging to grow in others. Now, this is not to say that it is wrong to have feeling of fear. Fear is an emotion we have been given by God and all of us will experience it. But the problems come when we handle fear the wrong way instead of taking our fears to the Lord, doing what He has given us to do in the situation, and then deliberately resting in the assurance that He will take care of the situation (and in this case, resting can take a lot of work!).

Verse 17 says that the woman “girds herself with strength and makes her arms strong.” In the phrase “makes her arms strong,” which is also translated as “strengtheneth her arms” in the King James Version, the word strengtheneth actually means physically or mentally alert or courageous. We see from the example of the Proverbs 31 woman that at times fear can be prevented through proper planning and preparation. The Proverbs 31 woman obviously spent time in preparation for the future that then paid off when difficult times came.

At other times disaster may strike unannounced and there is nothing that we could have done to be prepared.

This also does not mean that we are to be in constant fear, flying about madly trying to prepare for every type of emergency or accident that could possibly happen to us and those around us. The Proverbs 31 woman seems to be going about her preparations in a calm and reasoned manner. She was preparing for the snow that she knew would come, but not with a spirit of anxiety.

Have you been prepared yet still had fear? Why did you fear?

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Scripture gives us a few examples of women who dealt with fearsome situations in a way that is worth emulating.

Esther, when her people were in danger for their lives, instead of fretting, went into action. She did not take on a fatalistic attitude, but sought what she could do in the situation and obediently trusted the Lord both to care for her as she risked her own life and for to look after the safety of the entire nation of Israel.

Exodus 1 recounts the story of Shiphrah and Puah, two women about whom we

*“But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt had commanded them, but let the boys live.”*

*Exodus 1:17*

usually hear very little, but who exhibited much wisdom and bravery. The king of Egypt had commanded these women to put to death any male children born to the Hebrew women, but Shiphrah and Puah didn't fear the power of the king or the harm that could befall them if they refused to do what he had instructed. They, just as the Proverbs 31 woman does, feared the Lord and they served God even though they could have been placing themselves in danger because of it.

These three women are examples of doing what they were able to do to in a given situation, then leaving the results of the situation to the Lord and trusting Him fully for the outcome, just as we are to do.

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

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