

Threads of Hope Sewing Devotion 10

It's the start of a new year! Have you made some New Year's resolutions? Don't feel badly if you haven't. Surveys show that Americans are making New Year's resolutions in fewer numbers than ever before—just 29% of us took to making resolutions in 2022. But a new year does cause us to pause for a moment and think about our lives, our habits, and in general, the passing of time.

King Solomon has a few things to say about time in his little book of Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes sometimes seems like a downer book as Solomon, wise as he is, tries to make sense of life with his favorite phrases, “under the sun” and “meaningless, meaningless”. He discovers life truly IS meaningless if we are doing it without God. In chapter 3 of Ecclesiastes, Solomon gives us a little pondering poem about the ebb and flow of life. Solomon writes, “there is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven.” He then goes on to record 14 pairs of parallel and contrasting activities. Of course, the pair that catches our attention today is “a time to tear and a time to mend.” Different translations use similar words—“rend” for tearing or “sew” for mending. There is a time to tear and a time to sew. A time to rend and a time to mend.

Some Bible scholars suggest that “rending and mending” go along with the Biblical concept of grief. We have looked at the wearing of sackcloth, and part of that grief process is tearing one's clothes. Then when the period of mourning is over, the clothes would be repaired. But in light of Solomon's larger thought process here of the ebb and flow of life, I think rending and mending would be more than just an action for a specific time.

When I look at all the implements and tools in my sewing room, one of my least favorites would have to be the seam ripper. Why? Because it almost always means I did something wrong, made a mistake. And the mistake needs to be ripped out before it can be repaired and made right.

That's where a seam ripper comes in. The seam ripper was invented in the 1800's and the first models were little more than a thimble with a little knife blade attached at the top. The first patent for a seam ripper was given to John Fischer

of Canada in 1898. Can you believe this little tool is almost 125 years old? A seam ripper is also known as a “stitch un-picker” or a “quick un-pick” (say that five times!) but the design is pretty simple: two spokes, one sharp and the other blunt with a sharp blade at the intersection. Add a handle and you’ve got a seam ripper.

Or so it seems. Go on the internet to find a lowly seam ripper and you’ll discover soup to nuts. Or more precisely, cheap to costly. They range from about a dollar to over \$50.00. Some descriptions of seam rippers I found include:

- "the tool that does the job right and with precision"
- "made from premium grade stainless steel, so it never loses its sharpness"
- "an available magnifier attachment to help bring the work area into better view"
- "optional attached flashlight to assist vision"
- "nice weight and durability, this thing’s built to last!"
- "several sizes to perfectly fit your hands"
- "it will increase your desire to work for a long time"
- "user friendly so you won’t feel stressed"
- "the queen of all seam rippers so you can feel rich and famous while you rip through all of your hard work"
- "just plain stylish. If you’ve never been attracted to a seam ripper before... just wait until you meet this baby"
- and last but not least, “a great tool to make your sewing, crafting, quilting and embroidery projects hassle-free. This tool is especially great for eliminating undesired tags from fabrics as well as good for making buttonholes. It is also an excellent tool for removing hair from the vacuum cleaner brush”. Who knew?

If we were to consider Solomon's balance of life, what are some things you need to sew up in the new year? Are there good habits that you need to develop? People to invest in? Projects to devote yourself to? In the book of Revelation, John sees Jesus and his bride, the church, of which we are a part. The bride is dressed in a fine, linen gown and chapter 19, verse 8 tells us the dress is fashioned from "the righteous acts of the saints." Are you sewing up some righteous acts in your life?

Conversely, what are some things you need to rend? To cut out of your life? To rip out and re-do? One of the statements that impressed me when I was researching seam rippers is this: "the smooth and exact cutting motion is made by the hand movements of the operator." This description reminds me of God's ability to redesign my life. God is gentle enough to use the smooth, exact motions that cut out what should be removed without damaging my fabric. He often does this by using the ultimate seam ripper, the "double-edged sword" of the Scripture. II Timothy 3:15 says God's Word is profitable for instruction, for rebuke and correction. Listen to what the prophet Joel says: "Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love."

This month as you sew, take a look at the lowly seam ripper. Think about some sewing projects you have had to rip apart in order to make them right. Consider the mend-and-rend concept in your own life as you decide what you might need to eliminate or what you might need to build up in the coming year. Make sure you are using the Word of God to guide you as you sew up or tear out. May each of us be able to echo King David's words of Psalm 139, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts. See if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."