

Threads of Hope Devotion 15

Here we are again to discuss another Bible word to encourage us in our sewing. Do you think we are exhausting the subject or are there still some sewing concepts to think about? We'll see about that in the coming months!

Let's start by looking at the history of sewing patterns. Throughout ancient times, having a fashionable, fitted garment was not a major concern for most people. Clothing covered your body—period. The fabrics and materials were what one had access to. Pieces of clothing tended to be large and flowing and were draped around the body, held by a belt or a fastener of some sort. Sizing was not an issue. Garments were worn until they were no longer usable. Clothing for children was passed down to the next one as they grew. Pieces that didn't function anymore were often made over to be useful for someone else. Nothing was wasted or thrown out.

The only people that would have had garments fitted specifically for them were those affluent enough to afford a tailor or dressmaker. Style and fashion were for royalty and the rich. Personalized fit was a luxury. Those who could not afford a tailor bought used clothing or made do at home from what they could figure out and put together.

The earliest recorded books of patterns appeared in the late 1500's and came from Spain, the center of European fashion at the time. These pattern books, developed for tailors, featured drawings of garments for men, women, priests and knights with instructions for measuring, cutting and construction.

An increase in travel during the 1700's saw the general public becoming more aware of style with a greater interest in creating fashionable clothing at home. A book for home seamstresses--*Instructions for Cutting Out Apparel for the Poor*--became available in 1789 and offered pictures and instructions for creating garments using square and rectangular pieces of fabric. Also popular were traceable patterns that began to be offered in magazines about that same time. *The Lady's Economical Assistant*, a periodical published in England in 1808, started offering traceable patterns with instructions for sizing. Other magazines followed suit, offering paper diagrams of patterns, either directly included in their pages or available by mail. *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, as well as *Godey's*

Lady's Book in the United States contained these types of pattern instructions. *Madame Demorest's Mirror of Fashion* began offering full-sized patterns beginning in 1861. With the invention of the sewing machine in 1850 and railroad delivery of mail orders, Madame Demorest's patterns became so popular that they were offered in their own separate envelopes with color suggestions for fabrics and trim. However, like all patterns available during this time, they were only offered in one size with additional instructions for personalized fit.

In 1863, Ebenezer Butterick, a tailor from Massachusetts, seized upon the idea of offering patterns in graduated sizes. His business started as a home enterprise, with members of his family cutting and folding cardboard templates and including tissue paper for tracing of the pattern. Later, he included detailed instructions for clothing assembly and put all the pieces in a large envelope. His monthly magazine, the *Metropolitan*, advertised patterns in ten different sizes.

The turn of the century saw a variety of new pattern companies. Tailor James McCall started the McCall Pattern Company in New York City. His innovative Queen of Fashion patterns featured information printed directly on the tissue paper as well as color illustrations on the envelope.

The year 1927 saw the creation of the Simplicity Pattern Company, whose goal was to create patterns for the average woman. Simplicity executives had the desire to offer patterns to women without their having to purchase a magazine. Simplicity's easy-to-use, low-cost patterns made them the fastest growing company in the sewing industry. Simplicity Patterns sold for 15 cents compared to other patterns that may cost as much a dollar. In 1931, Simplicity partnered with F. W. Woolworth Company for exclusivity of their pattern sales, dropping the price to an even more economical 10 cents.

The development of paper patterns for home sewing has definitely followed the times and events of history. Paper and fabric shortages during World Wars I and II forced pattern companies to create simplified styles that used less fabric and were easier to create. Patterns featured ideas such as cutting sleeves and collars from contrasting fabrics which allowed seamstresses to use scraps. Make-over patterns gave instructions for working over ready-made garments such as used men's suits

into different pieces for women and children. Practical patterns for hospital gowns, nurses' uniforms and Red Cross apparel became available.

The popularity of various patterns was also based on class appeal. Simplicity advertised in such magazines as *The Farm Journal* to catch the business of rural and lower-class women. Butterick and McCall's patterns were marketed to the middle class and included articles on sewing methods and women's social issues. Butterick and McCall's patterns were sold through popular retailers like Sears, Roebuck, Montgomery Wards, and J. C. Penney. Vogue patterns were featured in *Conde Nast* magazine and were intended for more skilled seamstresses. Vogue patterns included photos of Hollywood actresses modeling the garments and capitalized on women's desire to look like movie stars.

Throughout the 1950's and 60's, pattern companies continued to follow women's fashion trends and the evolution of fabrics. With the introduction of Home Economics in American high schools, Butterick introduced the See-N'-Sew and KwikSew lines for beginning teen seamstresses and to accommodate the increase in knit fabrics. Patterns for home goods, crafts and costumes also became available.

From the start of home patterns, four companies have dominated the industry—Butterick, McCall's, Simplicity and Vogue. All four companies were consolidated under CSS Industries brand and recently acquired by Design Group, a greeting card and novelty distributor. Prices of patterns have risen dramatically as the home-sewing industry has declined but the manufacturer still follows fashion trends to be able to bring modern seamstresses patterns that can be completed with ease and precision.

A pattern gives us instructions and an example to follow. The Bible has many verses about patterns. Most refer to the specific guidelines that were to be followed in the building of the Tabernacle. God gave Moses precise instructions for the building, the curtains, the furniture, the serving objects and the priestly garments. Since these items were an indication of things in heaven, Scripture tells us in Hebrews 8:5 that God told Moses, "see to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown to you." Moses was not to deviate from the patterns that God provided.

The Bible tells us that in everything, Jesus Christ is the perfect pattern. His holy, sinless life is the example we should copy. I Peter 2:21 (DLNT) tells us, “for . . . Christ also suffered for you, leaving behind a pattern for you in order that you might follow after His footsteps.” Ephesians 5:1 gives us more pattern instructions when it says, “Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children.”

The Apostle Paul used his own life as a pattern when he addressed the churches of his time. In II Timothy 1:13, Paul told Timothy, “What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.” And again, in Philippians 3:17, Paul said, “Dear brothers and sisters, pattern your lives after mine, and learn from those who follow our example.” Paul was telling the early believers that they could use the instructions they heard from him and the behavior that he modeled for them as a pattern for living the Christian life.

Can you imagine telling other believers that they should use *your* life as a pattern? And yet, that is what Paul is saying. Paul is admonishing us to live holy lives so others can see us and do the same. In Titus 2:7 he reiterates, “in all things show yourself to be a pattern of good works.” Just like Paul, our speech and actions should provide the markings and instructions for other believers to follow.

The Scripture also tells us what pattern *not* to use for our lives. Romans 12:2 advises us “do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world.” The world’s attitudes, behaviors and motives provide a disastrous pattern to follow when constructing one’s life.

This month as you sew, think about what patterns you are selecting for the stitching of your life. Are you following the Perfect Pattern of Jesus Christ? Are you reading the instructions—God’s Word—on a regular basis? Would you be willing to tell someone else to trace the pattern of your life? Are you avoiding using the wrong pattern?

We are sewing dresses and shorts for Threads of Hope and sending garments around the world to serve boys and girls and to spread the Gospel story. Our work shows that we desire to please God and follow His pattern for our lives. I hope that is your goal as you sew this month.

