

So Long, Insecurity *It's time we got our dignity back.*

Beth Moore

Over the course of the last year or so as God has graciously pinpointed this area of my life for healing, I've come to some stark revelations about the toll of my insecurity. I am convinced now that virtually every destructive behavior and addiction I battled off and on for years was rooted in my (well-earned) insecurity. Not only was I abused, I was also raised in a home where I constantly wondered if my parents loved each other. I was an emotional wreck even as a young child, fearful and tearful. I developed the disturbing impression, whether or not it was accurate, that no one was emotionally healthy enough to carry the heavy psychological load of us five children. By the time I reached early adolescence, those impressions gave way to new and dangerous "freedoms." While the cats were distracted, the mice were destructive. I was crawling out of the bedroom window with my older sister when I should have still been playing with dolls.

As God took me through the journey that became the Bible study *Breaking Free*, He taught me to look for a common denominator among the things that triggered my destructive habits. Even then I came up with insecurity as the dominant answer. Christ performed a miracle on my heart and my mind through His Word and brought a decisive end to some behaviors and addictive tendencies I had battled almost all my life. It wasn't until the last few years though that I realized we had somehow never gotten all the way down to the deepest root of all: my persisting insecurity. Sometimes you have to shove all the surface stuff to the side in order to see what's underneath. Keep in mind that it took me a while to identify my ongoing problem because it only reared its head in certain select areas of my life. I was completely secure in others. Finally, those select areas caused me enough misery to make this pivotal God-fed decision: *I don't have to live this way anymore.*

You see, I had an advantage. I already knew Jesus could set a person free from absolutely anything. Insecurity did not have the right to be my exception, even if it had been with me from toddler-hood. Though I was no longer reacting to insecurity the way the enemy wanted me to, I had not yet begun to react in the way that God wanted me to. All too often, insecurity still left me feeling overexposed, foolish, and as if I had somehow lost my dignity.

Okay, Lord, so how do we begin? How are we going to attack this thing?

I've long since learned that God uses truth to set a person free, and since I was willing to be truthful about my own condition, I knew that God's truth was going to come to me next—probably in the form of Scripture. The only question was which one He would use.

"She is clothed with strength and dignity."

No, He didn't say it out loud. This verse came to me from out of the blue, from the recesses of my memory, blinking like a red neon "Vacancy" sign. Significantly, this is a description drawn from the portrait of Proverbs' "woman of valor." You've probably more commonly heard her called "the virtuous woman" or "the woman of noble character." I wholeheartedly want to be a virtuous woman and possess noble character, but in reality, the Hebrew term is most often used to convey valor. In fact, the same word is translated "mighty" in God's reference to Gideon in Judges 6:12.

The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.

Why must it be translated differently in Proverbs 31 just because she was a woman? Is it because it doesn't take as much courage to be a woman as it takes to be a man? I don't know what kind of courage it took thousands of years ago, but I know how courageous women need to be today. Even in the context of this woman's rich role in the family, can't the home be a fierce battlefield too? *Word Biblical Commentary* translates this word using its most common meaning: A woman of valor, who can find? Her value is beyond rubies.

And right there in the portrait of this courageous, effective woman, we find the words that scrolled through my head at the Holy Spirit's bidding: *She is clothed with strength and dignity*. I repeated the words over and over, then said them aloud, pausing this time with each word. **SHE. IS. CLOTHED. WITH. STRENGTH. AND. DIGNITY.**

I stopped dead in my tracks on the word *dignity*. Weeks prior, God had already brought me to the conclusion that part of any woman's healing from insecurity inevitably involves reclaiming her God-given dignity. I had not thought, however, that the process could be found in this verse. It was a passage that had never really spoken to me before. But I'd never stopped long enough to really consider the implications of it. With your indulgence, I'd like to unpack the verse in hopes that you, too, will see why it is significant in our journey.

She ...

Scripture's strong leaning toward male gender references never has bothered me. For instance, when the Bible refers to all of us who believe in Christ as the "sons of God," I'm perfectly at home with the generalization including females as well as males. Anyway, the way I see it, we women get a big turn on the reference to believers as "the bride of Christ." Still, when a superbly rich verse with a refreshingly positive spin on it speaks of a "she," I bask in it like a hot bubble bath. That God would highlight this passage for our decidedly female journey was tremendously touching to me. His Word is never beyond our reach, but sometimes He seems to go out of His way to set it squarely in the palm of our hands.

... Is Clothed ...

The word picture sketched by the reference of clothing speaks volumes. I don't know about you, but if I had to nail down the most common feeling I get when I've let my insecurity surface, it is the sense of being overexposed. I'm comfortable with the unhindered gaze of God on vulnerable places in my soul because I've come to trust Him so much and know how deeply He loves and accepts me. I'm not crazy about human eyes having that same kind of access, however. Obviously, part of that is my own pride. We'll deal with that issue soon enough. I have some broken, malformed areas deep down inside of me that I'd just as soon only allow God to see—at least until I receive a little healing. Make sense? Someone might reason that any semblance of hiding is unhealthy, but I'm not so sure about that. Our first reaction when we have a wound is to cover it with our hand. It is only when someone we trust comes to us with a bandage that we're willing to take our hand away and let that person see it. And even then, the first step toward healing is to clean and *dress* the wound.

When you and I are triggered to expose the most vulnerable, broken parts of ourselves through a rush of insecurity, we can train ourselves to immediately recite this truth to our souls: "It's okay. I'm completely clothed." And oddly, that very thought all by itself begins the healing. We are not nearly as likely to react with the same level of insecurity when we remember how well covered we are by God. I so hope that makes sense to you, because it resonates so strongly with me that I could cry.

... With Strength ...

Proverbs 31:25 tells us this "woman of valor" is clothed by two specific articles that become the perfect pair. The first is strength, and it has a tremendous bearing on our journey. Simply put, nothing makes a woman feel weaker than insecurity. When a wave of it hits us, don't we despise ourselves for not being able to handle the trigger better? Even if we didn't give our weakness away to the person nearest us, aren't we still painfully aware that insecurity got to us—*again*? Doesn't it have the most uncanny way of making us feel like wimps? Surely somebody else has said to herself the same thing I have: *I know better than this. I know this situation doesn't have the power to define or diminish me. Why on earth do I let it?* Because it makes me feel weak. And a little defenseless. And blast it, I'm not.

Oh, beloved, you are so much stronger than you give yourself credit for. If you are in Christ, you have divine power. In your gravest weakness, His strength is perfected. Sometimes it's imperative for a woman to give a good second look to what she's wearing out the door that day. If Christ is your Savior, sister, you are completely covered by a cloak of strength. But that's not all. You are clothed with strength

... And Dignity

Scripture doesn't say a woman of valor is clothed with strength and *masculinity*. It doesn't say she is clothed with strength and *inaccessibility*. It doesn't say she is clothed with strength and *no humility*. It says she is clothed with strength and dignity. This is the perfect time to point out that the woman of valor painted in Proverbs 31 happens to be a really terrific wife. The word translated "wife" in most versions of Proverbs 31:10 (as in the New International Version: "*A wife of noble character who can find?*") is a word that also simply means "woman." The word could refer to one who is single as easily as one who has a husband. In the context of Proverbs 31:10-31, the woman was married, and therefore, the translation as "wife" instead of "woman" works well. I'll tell you why I'm making an issue out of it.

Pride is dignity's counterfeit. Never lose sight of that. We don't forfeit our humility in order to get over insecurity. That brings us to an important question: what exactly *is* dignity? The same Hebrew term translated "dignity" in the passage about the woman of valor's apparel is found in sublime words written by the psalmist to his Creator. Revel in the context.

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.

Psalm 8:3-5

Here the word is translated "honor" in English instead of "dignity," but it is derived from the same Hebrew term and holds the identical meaning. We can insert our key word without damaging the meaning of the verse one iota:

You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and [dignity].

We have dignity precisely because God Himself gave it to us, His prized creation. You and I, along with every other human being on the planet, possess dignity because God Himself has it and He created us in His image. (The word is elsewhere translated as "splendor" in reference to Him.) God didn't just confer dignity to us. According to Psalm 8:5, He *crowned* us with it. We are wise to note that all people have God-given dignity even if they don't yet have eternal life through Jesus Christ.

To possess dignity is to be worthy of respect. Worthy of high esteem. Absorb this: you are worthy of respect. So am I. No matter how foolish insecurity has tried to make us feel, we have the right to dignity because God Himself gave it to us. If we really believed this truth, we wouldn't have to mask our insecurity with pride. If we knew who we were and what God has conferred upon us, what everybody else thought of us would grow less and less significant.

Notice that God didn't put this honor/dignity in our hands. **He put it on our heads.** He wrapped it as a crown right around our minds, just where we need it most. Our possession of dignity is not always something we feel. It's got to be something we know. Something we emphatically claim.

A few days ago I watched a debate on public television involving Dr. Deepak Chopra. I've thought and thought about the irony of something he said: "All belief is a cover-up for insecurity."

Quite the contrary, sir. All insecurity is a cover-up for unbelief.

She is clothed with strength and dignity.

Believe it, sister.

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