

# PROUD. HAUGHTY. OVER-INVOLVED.

## WEEK TWO

**THEME:** This week we examine verse 1 of Psalm 131 and consider how the destructive path of the proud and arrogant is dissolved through trusting in God

**WATCH VIDEO:** *Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust. Episode 2: Not Proud or Haughty*  
Watch this week's video before the small group gathering.

**Consider these questions:**

- Would you consider yourself a proud or arrogant person?
  - When do you consider yourself "the smartest person in the room?" Why?
  - How does surrendering yourself to God lead to calm, quiet, hope, and trust?
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## SMALL GROUP SESSION TWO: PRIDE AND ARROGANCE

**ICEBREAKER:** Each week the discussion begins with a question that allows the group to share from their own personal experiences.

**Icebreaker Questions:**

- What is something you are an expert at?
- What is something in which you wish you were an expert?

**WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL REVIEW:** Take time to process the group's experiences in last week's devotional.

**Discuss:**

- What were some thoughts and themes that stood out to you during your reading of the Psalms of Ascent?
- What were some of your initial reactions to Psalm 131?
- What do you hope to gain by studying this psalm?
- What did you create for your artistic expression and how it helped you connect to God or the Psalms?

**VIDEO DISCUSSION:** Discuss themes found in this week's video.

- Why does it feel impossible to honestly say "My heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty?"
- What is the danger in seeing yourself as the smartest man or woman in the room?
- Dave compares a proud heart and haughty eyes to Jesus' parable of the soils (Matthew 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20, and Luke 8:4-15). How does a person's pride affect their ability to truly hear God's word?
- How does surrendering yourself to God lead to calm, quiet, hope, and trust?

**QUOTE:** Eugene Peterson

*Psalm 131 is a maintenance psalm. It is functional to the person of faith as pruning is functional to the gardener: it gets rid of that which looks good to those who don't know any better, it reduces the distance between our hearts and their roots in God.<sup>11</sup>*

**MEDITATE:** Close your eyes and prayerfully listen to Psalm 131:

Lord, my heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty.  
I do not get involved with things too great or too wondrous for me.  
Instead, I have calmed and quieted my soul  
like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like a weaned child.  
Israel, put your hope in the Lord, both now and forever.

**INTRO:** This week we are focusing on verse 1. What does it mean to be proud or haughty? Why do we get overly involved with things above our paygrade? Will we ever come to a place where we can honestly say that we are not proud or arrogant? Can this psalm be read any other way than tongue in cheek? The first verse reminds us of the dangers of pride and arrogance. It shows our tendency to see ourselves as superior by getting overly involved in things beyond our understanding. In order to even remotely claim an end to pride and arrogance, we must begin to trust in God.

**READ VERSE 1:**

Lord, my heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty.  
I do not get involved with things too great or too wondrous for me.

**Discuss:**

- What is your reaction when you read Psalm 131?
- Do you struggle to claim this verse in your life? Why?

**QUOTE:** Matthew Henry

*Some have made it an objection against singing [this] psalm [saying ] that there are many who cannot say, 'My heart is not haughty..' But we may sing it for the same purpose that we read it, to teach and admonish ourselves, and [become what] we ought to be.<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>11</sup> Peterson, Eugene. Long Obedience in the Same Direction. Pg 149

<sup>12</sup> Henry, Matthew, Commentary on Psalm 131  
([www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mhc/Psa/Psa\\_131.cfm?a=609001](http://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mhc/Psa/Psa_131.cfm?a=609001))

**Discuss:**

- How can the psalmist's claim in verse one inspire us to become less proud and arrogant?

**PROUD AND HAUGHTY:** Discuss the definition and synonyms for proud and haughty.

**Proud:** A high opinion of oneself. (Dictionary)

**Haughty:** Arrogantly superior. (Dictionary)

**Commentary:** Elevation of the heart, raising the eyebrows, puffing the cheeks, looking askance at everyone.

**Thesaurus:** (in alphabetical order) assuming, bloated, cavalier, cocky, conceited, contemptuous, disdainful, dismissive, domineering, egotistical, high and mighty, high horse, huffy, insulant, lofty, narcissistic, overbearing, pompous, presumptuous, snobbish, uppity, & vain

**DISCUSS:**

- What are some synonyms and idioms for the proud and haughty?
- Based on these words, is pride a positive or negative trait?
- Why do you think the psalmist needs to do away with a proud heart and haughty eyes?

**QUOTE:** Eugene Peterson.

It is difficult to recognize pride as a sin when it is held up on every side as a virtue, urged as profitable and rewarded as an achievement. What is described in scripture as the basic sin, the sin of taking things into your own hands, being your own god, grabbing what is there while you can get it, is now described as basic wisdom: improve yourself by whatever means you are able; get ahead regardless of the price, take care of me first.<sup>13</sup>

**Discuss:**

- Do you agree or disagree that pride is seen as a virtue in our culture? Why?
- According to Peterson, how is pride sin? Do you agree?
- How does pride cause us to usurp authority from God?

**SELFISH AMBITION**

Haughty is not a word that we commonly use these days. Some commentators say that being haughty connects with selfish ambition, the desire to seek our own advancement before the good of others.

**QUOTE:** from Exposition of the Bible, Volume 3

*Lofty [haughty] thoughts of self, breed ambition... worldly ambitions is aiming at prominence and position.*<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Peterson, Eugene. *Long Obedience in the Same Direction*. Pg 152

<sup>14</sup> Exposition of the Bible, Volume 3

**QUOTE:** Eugene Peterson

Ambition is aspiration gone crazy. Aspiration is the channeled, creative energy that moves us to growth in Christ... Ambition takes these same energies for growth and development and uses them to make something tawdry and cheap.<sup>15</sup>

**Discuss:**

- What is the difference between aspiration and ambition?
- When does aspiration become unhealthy?
- What is wrong with ambition?

**PROVERBS:**

While we often praise the proud and haughty, the Bible speaks of their peril. Pride leads us to believe that we know what is best, at first for ourselves and then for others. Soon we begin to think that we know better than God.

**Proverbs 16:18, NIV**

Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

**Proverbs 21:4 (NIV)**

Haughty eyes and a proud heart— the unplowed field of the wicked—produce sin.

**Discuss:**

- How does pride and arrogance lead to destruction? Can you think of examples?
- What type of sins do pride and arrogance produce?
- What negative effects have you seen come from pride and arrogance in your life?

**OVER INVOLVED**

Pride leads us to believe that we know what is best, at first for ourselves and then for others. Soon we begin to think that we know better than God. If you are anything like me, you set your sights on things beyond your reach. You stretch yourself beyond your paygrade. You think your way is best and become easily frustrated when things do not go according to your plan.

**PSALM 131:1B**

I do not get involved with things too great or too wondrous for me.

**QUOTE:** Theodoret of Cyrus

**Theodoret of Cyrus** translates this line, *"I kept myself in check and did not attempt what was beyond my state."*<sup>16</sup>

**Discuss:**

- What do you think it means to be overly involved in great and wondrous things?
- How does that relate to attempting that is beyond your state?
- Why do we obsess with things beyond ourselves?

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<sup>15</sup> Peterson

<sup>16</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary*

**QUOTE:** Bernard P. Robinson

*When the Psalmist says to not get 'involved with things too great or too wondrous,' he is saying that we are not to seek self-aggrandizement and glory. Greatness and the marvelous pertain more to God than mankind. For us to go about these normally divine activities is to arrogate divine attributes to oneself.<sup>17</sup>*

**Discuss:**

- Why do we seek self-aggrandizement and glory?
- How does seeking "Greatness and the marvelous" cause us to perceive ourselves as equals with God?

**QUOTE:** Stephen Shoemaker

*The Psalmist has come through to say, 'I do not occupy myself with things too great or too marvelous for me.' It is the admission to the end of human wisdom. It says my knowledge alone cannot take me to you. It recognizes what a mature faith must – that trust is deeper than knowledge, deeper than theology.<sup>18</sup>*

**Discuss**

- Why do we seek the answers to questions that are beyond us?
- What are we hoping to achieve?
- What does that say about our opinion of ourselves?

**EXAMPLES IN SCRIPTURE:**

**ORIGINAL SIN: Genesis 3: 1-6 (CSB)**

Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You can't eat from any tree in the garden'?"

2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. 3 But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, 'You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.'"

4 "No! You will certainly not die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

**Discuss:**

- How did the serpent tempt Eve with things too great and wondrous?
- How does our pride and arrogance make things beyond seem "delightful to look at?"
- How did their self absorbed choice bring devastation to themselves and others?

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<sup>17</sup> Robinson, Bernard P.. Form and Meaning in Psalm 131. Pg 183

<sup>18</sup> Shoemaker, H. Stephen. Psalm 131. Pg 93

### **PARABLE OF RICH MAN: Luke 12:16-21 (CSB)**

16 Then he told them a parable: “A rich man’s land was very productive. 17 He thought to himself, ‘What should I do, since I don’t have anywhere to store my crops? 18 I will do this,’ he said. ‘I’ll tear down my barns and build bigger ones and store all my grain and my goods there. 19 Then I’ll say to myself, “You have many goods stored up for many years. Take it easy; eat, drink, and enjoy yourself.””

20 “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is demanded of you. And the things you have prepared—whose will they be?’

21 “That’s how it is with the one who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

#### **Discuss:**

- How was this rich man getting “involved with things too great or too wondrous?”
- What was the problem with the man’s plans?
- Why do you think God responds the way He does?
- What does this teach us about our attitude toward self-aggrandizement?

### **THE LORD’S WILL: James 4: 13-17**

13 Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will travel to such and such a city and spend a year there and do business and make a profit.” 14 Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring—what your life will be! For you are like vapor that appears for a little while, then vanishes.

15 Instead, you should say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” 16 But as it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

#### **Discuss:**

- How does this passage compare with Jesus’ parable?
- Is it wrong to make plans for the future?
- How can our making future plans shift from possible to expectation?
- Why is it important to remind ourselves of “If the Lord wills”?

### **TRUST IN THE LORD: Proverbs 3:5-7**

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding;  
6 in all your ways know him, and he will make your paths straight.

7 Don’t be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil.

#### **Discuss:**

- Why is it dangerous to consider ourselves “wise in your own eyes” and to “rely on your own understanding”?

- What is the suggested alternative to personal reliance and wisdom?
  - When we surrender our pride and arrogance, and trust God he will guide us toward straight paths. How does self surrender allow for God's guidance?
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## THE WEEK AHEAD:

**WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL:** This week we will take a deeper look into verse 1, and will use the following quote adapted from Bernard Robinson article Forms and Meaning in Psalm 131.

*The Psalmist says 'my heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty.' These two body parts, the heart and eyes, stand for the whole person. The parts mentioned however are not chosen at random: The Psalmist is speaking of the whole self, but with special reference to his heart and his eyes. In that culture the heart would refer to his way of thinking and eyes to a way of looking at things, perspective. These two add up to a single thought, the renunciation of arrogance. The Psalmist could have continued by saying that his feet have not stood on high ground. When the Psalmist says to not get 'involved with things too great or too wondrous,' he is saying that we are not to seek self-aggrandizement and glory. Greatness and the marvelous pertain more to God than mankind. For us to go about these normally divine activities is to arrogate divine attributes to oneself.<sup>19</sup>*

**ARTISTIC EXPRESSION:** This week you are invited to create a visual representation of what God is teaching you through Psalm 131:1. How has the theme of pride and arrogance connected with you this week? Put pencil to paper, paint to canvas, thread to needle, whichever medium you choose.

Consider creating a heart and labeling it with things feed your pride and arrogance. As you create, meditate on these words, offering them to God. Return to it often for inspiration or additional expression. This can be done at any point in the week. Afterwards, confess these things to God and surrender your heart to Him.

**SPIRITUAL PRACTICE:** This week's practice is a centering prayer. This is an ancient prayer practice where you meditate on one word. Your focus will be one of our key words: calm, quiet, hope, or trust.

**Calm:** We will begin by coming to the Lord to calm your heart and quiet your soul. As you become relaxed, silently and gently offer the sacred word, **calm**, to God. Meditate on the word calm, drawing yourself into God's calming presence. As other thoughts, memories, feelings or images come to your mind, gently return to calm.

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<sup>19</sup> Robinson, Bernard P.. *Form and Meaning in Psalm 131*. 182-183

**CLOSING:**

This week take time to consider the role that pride and arrogance play in your daily life. When are those times that we think that our perspective is the right one, and we reject the views of others? In those moment, calm your heart and quiet your soul, put your hope in the Lord, and not your own understanding.

**SCRIPTURE MASH-UP:****Proverbs 3 & Psalm 131**

Don't be wise in your own eyes;  
Don't be impressed with your own wisdom.  
Lord, my heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty.  
Instead, fear the Lord and turn away from evil.  
Trust in the Lord with all your heart,  
and do not rely on your own understanding;  
Do not get involved with things too great or too wondrous .  
Instead, calm your heart and quiet your soul.  
In all your ways submit to him  
Seek his will in all you do,  
And He will show you which path to take.

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

Lord, my heart is not proud;  
my eyes are not haughty.  
I do not get involved with things too great  
or too wondrous for me.  
Instead, I have calmed and quieted my soul  
like a weaned child with its mother;  
my soul is like a weaned child.  
Israel, put your hope in the Lord,  
both now and forever.  
AMEN!