

# PRACTICE AND DEVOTION

## WEEK 1

### A Pilgrimage through the Psalms of Ascent

#### OVERVIEW:

Take some time each day this week to connect with God through the Psalms of Ascent and then move deeper into Psalm 131. I have provided you with a roadmap for a daily pilgrimage, which includes music, prayer, scripture, and personal interaction. There is also an artistic expression project that allows you to connect with God in a creative form of worship. Traversing through each day will help you connect with God and your fellow travelers. We are all on this pilgrimage together.

For your devotional I would recommend having your Bible and a journal, along with colored pencils, highlighters, and a pen or pencil. You will also need to access the Psalm 131 soundtrack, especially tracks 1 & 2. Depending on your situation, you can play these songs from a stereo or through headphones. You will want to have the music envelop you as you listen to it.

#### SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: Breathing Prayer

Take a deep slow breath in. Allow the air to fill your lungs, then slowly exhale. Repeat. Slow deep breaths allow us to relax and release the stress and tension that can overwhelm our bodies. Breathing prayers allow us to release our stress and worry to God and receive the Spirit of comfort and peace. These prayers are often a time to confess our need for God, and to invite His presence into our lives.

I spent a day on a spiritual retreat, walking around the hill country outside of San Antonio. I was using different spiritual practices to connect with God through Psalm 131. As I meditated on this Psalm, four statements came to my mind: *calm my heart, quiet my soul, hope in the Lord, trust now and always*. As I hiked along a creek, I began to recite these four statements in my mind. Slowly, it became patterned after my breath - calm, quiet, hope, trust.

Breathe in, asking God to calm your heart.  
Breathe out, releasing quiet into your soul.  
Breathe in, filling yourself with the hope of the Lord.  
Breath out, releasing control by trusting God.

Breathe in: Calm my heart.  
Breathe out: Quiet my soul.  
Breathe in: Hope in the Lord.  
Breath out: Trust now and always

Breathe in: Calm.  
Breathe out: Quiet.  
Breathe in: Hope.  
Breath out: Trust.

Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

Repeat this as you prepare yourself to spend time with God. Repeat this as you move from quiet time to the chaos of life. Repeat this as you are engulfed in the stressful storms of life. Repeat this as you lie down to sleep.

## **ARTISTIC EXPRESSION:**

Choose a word or theme that has spoken to you from the Psalms of Ascent or consider the imagery of the pilgrimage. Put pencil to paper, paint to canvas, thread to needle, whatever medium you choose. Create a visual representation of what God is teaching you through the Psalms of Ascent. 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. Art is best appreciated when shared. Consider sharing your expression with the group at our next gathering.

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## **DAILY DEVOTIONAL WEEK ONE**

### **DAY ONE:**

**BREATHE:** Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

Take a few minutes and practice our breathing prayer as you come into God's presence. Calm your heart. Quiet your soul. Hope in the Lord. Trust now and always. Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

**MUSIC:** Listen to John Michael Talbot's chant Psalm 131

**READ & INTERACT.** Read through the first five Psalms of Ascent, Psalm 120-124, imagining these are the soundtrack for your spiritual pilgrimage. Highlight or write down words or phrases that you connect with. Look for repeated phrases or patterns in the individual psalms and the collection.

### **CONSIDER:**

- Which was your favorite Psalm and why?
- What words or phrases resonated with you during your reading?
- What patterns did you see in this collection of psalms?

**JOURNAL:** Write about these words, bringing them to God in conversation with your faith journey. How can these songs add life to your current pilgrimage?

**BREATHING PRAYER:** Calm, Quiet, Hope, Trust.

**MUSIC:** Listen to the Orchardist, Psalm 131

## DAY TWO:

**BREATHE:** Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

Take a few minutes and practice our breathing prayer as you come into God's presence. Calm your heart. Quiet your soul. Hope in the Lord. Trust now and always. Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

**MUSIC:** Listen to John Michael Talbot's chant Psalm 131

**READ & INTERACT.** Read through the middle five Psalms of Ascent, Psalm 125-129, imagining these are the soundtrack for your spiritual pilgrimage. Highlight or write down words or phrases that you connect with. Look for repeated phrases or patterns in the individual psalms and the collection.

**CONSIDER:**

- Which was your favorite Psalm and why?
- What words or phrases resonated with you during your reading?
- What patterns did you see in this collection of psalms?

**JOURNAL:** Write about these words, bringing them to God in conversation with your faith journey. How can these songs add life to your current pilgrimage?

**MUSIC:** Listen to the Orchardist, Psalm 131

**BREATHE:** Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

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## DAY THREE:

**BREATHE:** Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

Take a few minutes and practice our breathing prayer as you come into God's presence. Calm your heart. Quiet your soul. Hope in the Lord. Trust now and always. Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

**MUSIC:** Listen to John Michael Talbot's chant Psalm 131

**READ & INTERACT.** Read through the middle five Psalms of Ascent, Psalm 130-134, imagining these are the soundtrack for your spiritual pilgrimage. Highlight or write down words or phrases that you connect with. Look for repeated phrases or patterns in the individual psalms and the collection.

**CONSIDER:**

- Which was your favorite Psalm and why?

- What words or phrases resonated with you during your reading?
- What patterns did you see in this collection of psalms?

**JOURNAL:** Write about these words, bringing them to God in conversation with your faith journey. How can these songs add life to your current pilgrimage?

**MUSIC:** Listen to the Orchardist, Psalm 131

**BREATHE:** Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

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## **DAY FOUR:**

**BREATHE:** Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

Take a few minutes and practice our breathing prayer as you come into God's presence. Calm your heart. Quiet your soul. Hope in the Lord. Trust now and always. Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

**MUSIC:** Listen to John Michael Talbot's chant Psalm 131

**READ** Psalm 131 three times.

- **The first two times**, let the words fill heart and soul, soaking in the entire psalm.
- **The third time**, let your heart seek a word or phrase that resonates with your current state.

**INTERACT:** Highlight, underline or write down any words or phrases that stand out to you.

**CONSIDER:**

- What is your initial opinion of Psalm 131?
- What words or phrases did you highlight?
- Why did you find those words significant?

**MEDITATE:** Choose one of the words from your list that stands out to you. Close your eyes and think about that word, repeating it over and over in your mind. As other thoughts invade, allow them to interact with your selected word. After a few moments, offer that word to God as your offering for your day.

**JOURNAL:** Write about your word and how it connects with your life and relationship with God. Share with God about how this word can impact your current pilgrimage.

**MUSIC:** Listen to the Orchardist, Psalm 131

**BREATHE:** Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

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## **DAY FIVE:**

**BREATHE:** Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

Take a few minutes and practice our breathing prayer as you come into God's presence. Calm your heart. Quiet your soul. Hope in the Lord. Trust now and always. Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

**MUSIC:** Listen to John Michael Talbot's chant Psalm 131

**READ** through Psalm 131 three times.

- **The first time**, gain an overview of the psalm.
- **The second time**, focus on the word *my*, pausing after each time it appears.
- **The third time**, read the psalm and pause after the word following *my* (ie my heart, my eyes, etc).

**INTERACT:** Circle each time 'my' appears in this psalm, then underline the word that follows 'my.' Write down the list of 'my' statements.

**CONSIDER:**

- What do the 'my' statements represent in your life.
- Do these words remind you of any other passages in the Bible? If so, look them up and read them.
- How do they enhance your view of Psalm 131?

**JOURNAL:** Write a prayer of surrender to God, offering Him all the things on your 'my' list. Write of other things that you need to surrender to God in order to enter into a place of calm, quiet, hope and trust.

**MUSIC:** Listen to the Orchardist, Psalm 131

**BREATHING PRAYER:** Calm, Quiet, Hope, Trust.