

PRACTICE & DEVOTION

WEEK THREE:

Instead, I have calmed and quieted my soul

OVERVIEW: This week we are transitioning from verse one to verse two, inviting Jesus to move us out of our prideful hearts and into our quiet souls. We will consider how letting go of who we are is an act of surrender and embracing the calming presence of Jesus is a call to a life of humility. As we journey together this week, we will look at three stories where Jesus brings calm into a chaotic situation. We will conclude with comparing and contrasting the two New Testament passages that quote the proverb: “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

This week you will also be invited to participate in the Ignatian Contemplation, or imagination prayer. You will be invited to enter into a particular scene where Jesus brings calm to chaos. Let this scene overwhelm and overtake you. This exercise will take around 30 minutes, so you will need to find a quiet place.

Eugene Peterson writes that Psalm 131 teaches us to say, “I will not try to run my own life or the lives of others; that is God’s business, I will not pretend to invent the meaning of the universe; I will accept what God has shown its meaning to be; I will not strut about demanding that I be treated as the center of my family or my neighborhood or my work, but seek to discover where I fit and do what I am good at. The soul, clamoring for attention and arrogantly parading its importance, is calmed and quieted so that it can be itself, truly.”²⁷

MUSIC: This week I am inviting you to use Sarah Sparks’ song, inspired by Psalm 131. It speaks of a person who is wrestling with God in the night. We all have restless nights where we cry out to God. We are waiting, desperate, and angry as we ask God to calm and quiet our souls. I am including the lyrics so that you can follow along with her story. I encourage you to give this song a listen and let it inspire your time with Him.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: Ignatian Contemplation (Imaginative Prayer)

This week I am inviting you to participate in a 16th century prayer exercise, known as Ignatian Contemplation, or imaginative prayer. It is an active way of praying that engages the mind and heart and stirs up thoughts and emotions. In this spiritual exercise, you place yourself inside a biblical story, using your imagination to interact with Jesus and others.

This week you will be invited to place yourself in a gospel story, experiencing the scene in your imagination, enveloping the scene and interacting with those present.

Choose your text: I have selected three stories where Jesus enters into the chaos and brings calm. While I encourage you to use one of these three stories, you are welcome to select an alternative.

- Mark 4: 35-41-Jesus calms the storm
- Matthew 14: 22-33-Jesus and Peter walking on the water
- Mark 9: 14-27-Jesus heals a man’s demon possessed son

Center yourself: Begin with a breathing prayer or listening to John Michael Talbot’s Psalm 131.

Calm & Quiet: Take several deep breaths, try to clear your mind. Become aware of being in God’s presence. Offer to God all your pride and ambition and ask for peace and grace that you

²⁷ Peterson, Euguene, A Long Obedience in the Same Direction. Pg 154.

need right now.

Read and reflect: Read the text slowly and carefully. Reflect on elements of the story that connect with your soul.

Enter the story: Place yourself inside the story, using your imagination; become one of the characters in the scene. Participate in the dynamics of the scene, dialoguing & interacting with Jesus and other characters. Observe what is going on around you in the scene: what you see, hear, feel, smell, taste, touch. Dialogue with the other characters: What do they say or ask you? What do you say or ask them in reply?

Observe: Notice what is going on inside you as you pray: joy, sorrow, peace, confusion, love, anger, etc. If you get distracted or your mind wanders, gently return to the biblical text and re-enter the scene.

Closing Prayer: Enter into a short personal conversation with Jesus. Speak heart-to-heart, as if conversing with a close friend. Ask Jesus what He would say to you today.

Process: Review what you experienced during this time of prayer. Consider writing your experience in a journal or drawing what happened while in your scene.

ARTISTIC EXPRESSION: After completing the Ignatian Contemplation, consider expressing your encounter with Jesus through an artistic medium. Recreate your imaginative experience through drawing, painting, poetry, composing. As you create, offer your expression to God. Return to it often for inspiration or additional expression.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL WEEK 3

DAY ONE: Jesus Calms the Storm

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.

READ: Psalm 131: 1-2a

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

JOURNAL: What is keeping you from having a calm and quiet soul today?

MUSIC: Listen to Psalm 131 by Sarah Sparks

READ: Mark 4: 35-41

REFLECT

- How was chaos being experienced in this passage?
- How do the disciples respond to the chaotic situation?
- How does Jesus respond to the chaos?
- How does Jesus bring calm?
- What is the disciples' response? Why?

RESPOND:

- How might the chaos in your life be reflected in the storm at sea?
- How are you reacting to the storms?

REACT: Invite Jesus into your storms and ask him to calm and quiet your soul.

LISTEN: Listen to John Michael Talbot's Psalm 131 (Come to the Quiet)

MEDITATE: "The wind ceased, and there was a great calm." Sit in quiet for at least a minute.

BREATHE: Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

DAY TWO: Jesus and Peter Walking on Water

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.

READ: Psalm 131: 1-2a

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

JOURNAL: What is keeping you from a calm and quiet soul today? What is stealing your focus from Jesus?

MUSIC: Listen to Psalm 131 by Sarah Sparks.

READ: Matthew 14: 22-33

REFLECT:

- What was causing the disciples to fear?
- How does Jesus respond to their fear?
- Why does Peter step out of the boat?
- What causes him to sink?
- How does Jesus respond to Peter's sinking?
- What is the disciples' response to Jesus?

RESPOND:

- What are the things causing you to sink?
- How are they keeping you from having a calm and quiet soul?
- Have you cried out, "Lord, save me!"?

REACT: Imagine Jesus is reaching out his hand. Reach out and grasp it. Imagine him rescuing you from sinking. What thoughts and emotions come to mind as you are rescued from sinking?

MUSIC: Listen to John Michael Talbot's Psalm 131 (Come to the Quiet)

MEDITATE: Read Psalm 40:2 three times, imagining Jesus lifting you up.
He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along.

BREATHE: Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

DAY THREE: Jesus heals a man's demon possessed son

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.

READ: Psalm 131: 1-2a

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

MUSIC: Listen to Psalm 131 by Sarah Sparks.

JOURNAL: What is keeping you from a calm and quiet soul today? What is causing you to not fully believe in Jesus?

READ: Mark 9: 14-27

REFLECT:

- Why did the man bring his son to the disciples?
- What were the disciples arguing about?
- How does Jesus respond to the disciples' ineptitude?
- What does this passage say about belief and unbelief?
- How does Jesus bring calm and quiet to the man, the boy, and over demonic forces?

CONSIDER:

"If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."

Jesus said to him, "If I can? Everything is possible for the one who believes."

The father instantly cried out, "I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!"

RESPOND:

- Where do you need Jesus to offer compassion and help in your life?
- What demons are plaguing your soul?

REMEMBER: *"Help me overcome my unbelief!"* Think about times you struggled in faith and how Jesus helped overcome your unbelief.

JOURNAL: Confess the areas that you are struggling in your faith and ask God to help you overcome your unbelief by calming your heart and quieting your soul. Cry out to Jesus to help you overcome your unbelief.

MUSIC: Listen to John Michael Talbot's Psalm 131 (Come to the Quiet)

MEDITATE: Read these words of Jesus three times, remembering both your trials and how they were overcome.

Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows.
But take heart, because I have overcome the world.
(John 16:33)

BREATHE: Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

DAY FOUR: Calm and Quiet

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.

READ: Psalm 131: 1-2a

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

MEDITATE: Close your eyes and meditate on the "I have calmed and quieted my soul." Repeat that phrase in your mind seven times.

MUSIC: Listen to John Michael Talbot's Psalm 131 (Come to the Quiet)

READ: Talbot sings, "Just come to the quiet. Come and still your soul...Come and still your soul, Completely." Do you find it challenging to come to the quiet, to still your soul? I wrote in my journal recently, "God, my heart is often proud and haughty. I desire for things to be busy and rushed. I get bored and nervous in the quiet. I turn to my phone and look for ways to find meaning. Work, tasks, something that says I have meaning."

CONSIDER:

- How do you respond when you are quiet? Do you embrace or do you look for distraction?
- Why do we find it difficult to come to the quiet? What is it about the quiet that makes us nervous?
- What is the benefit of calming and quieting our soul?

READ: Hebrews 12:1 says, "Let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up." There are things in our lives that keep us from coming to the quiet, *weights that slow us down*. These things are not sin, but they keep our focus off of God. Then there are the things that we purposely use to distract ourselves from being quiet, *the sin that trips us up*. We intentionally choose to turn our eyes to those things instead of God.

JOURNAL: Write out the things in your life that keep your focus from God and the things you choose to distract you from quieting your soul. Confess your need for calm and quiet, and ask God to still your soul.

LISTEN: Listen again to John Michael Talbot's Psalm 131 (Come to the Quiet), allowing the words to fill your soul.

MEDITATE: "Be still, and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10)

BREATHE: Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

DAY FIVE: "Come to Me." - Jesus

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 Psalm 131 by Sarah Sparks.

READ: Psalm 131: 1-2a

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

MEDITATE: Close your eyes and meditate on the "I have calmed and quieted my soul." Repeat that phrase in your mind seven times.

INTERACT: Read Matthew 11: 28-30. Grab three different colored pencils. Read it a second time and underline any words or phrases that leap off the page and into your heart. Read it a third time and with a different color and circle *you/your* and underline the phrases that you are to do. Read it a fourth time and circle the references to Jesus (me, my, I, etc) and underline all that Jesus offers or does.

JOURNAL: Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens." (Matthew 11: 28) What are the things that are making you weary and what is burdening you?

READ: James 4:7

Casting all your cares on him, because he cares about you.

IMAGINE: Close your eyes and imagine you are coming to Jesus weary and burdened. Slowly remove those burdens and lay them at Jesus' feet.

MUSIC: Listen to John Michael Talbot's Psalm 131 (Come to the Quiet)

MEDITATE: "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you." 1 Peter 2:8

BREATHE: Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.