

PRACTICE AND DEVOTION WEEK 2

Proud and Haughty

OVERVIEW: This week we are going to dive deeper into the truth found in Psalm 131, that we are proud and arrogant people. Our proud heart and haughty eyes distort our perception of reality, making us think that we have some semblance of control. As we begin our pilgrimage through Psalm 131, we must get rid of the things that keep our focus on ourselves and turn our eyes toward God.

Eugene Peterson writes, "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."²⁰

Our daily devotions are designed to prune your hearts and actions so that you will be drawn closer to God. Your time this week will include various passages of scripture to look through and some questions to wrestle through. You will be invited to journal confessions of your pride and arrogance to God, and to surrender control to God. The devotion will also include music, prayer, and contemplation. Additionally, I invite you to participate in an artistic response and the spiritual practice of centering prayer.

ARTISTIC EXPRESSION:

How has the theme of proud and haughty connected with you this week? Put pencil to paper, paint to canvas, thread to needle, whichever medium you choose. Create a visual representation of what God is teaching you through Psalm 131:1.

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.

Art is best appreciated when shared. Consider sharing your expression with the group at our next gathering.

QUOTE: Bernard P. Robinson

Use this quote each day during each day of this week's devotional.

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.²¹

²⁰ Peterson, Eugene. Long Obedience in the Same Direction. Pg ?

²¹ Robinson, Bernard P. *Form and Meaning in Psalm 131*. Pg 182-183

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: Centering Prayer

Centering prayer is a contemporary form of an ancient Christian prayer practice that takes us gently into a deeper and deeper intimacy with God. We are invited to be still and silent with the Divine. We sit down with the intention to consent to both the presence and action of the Holy Spirit within us, inviting Him to heal and transform us.²²

Choose your word: Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

In centering prayer, we use a single word (not a phrase) to focus on God and prepare ourselves for the gift of God's presence. For this experience, choose one of our theme words; calm, quiet, hope, or trust. If the Lord lays a different word on your heart, do not ignore the leading of the Spirit.

Find a position that allows you to be relaxed and alert. Close your eyes and breathe deeply several times. Consciously release any muscle tension you become aware of.

Begin by asking the Lord to teach you how to still your soul. Ask Him to bless you, protect you, guide you...as you spend this time with Him. Know that it is His good pleasure to help you learn to draw near to Him!

As you become relaxed, silently and gently offer your sacred word to God as a sign of your desire for and consent to God's presence and action within you. As you become aware of other thoughts, memories, feelings or images, instead of fighting them, gently return to your sacred word.

Remain in this state of rest and receptivity to God for 20 minutes or so. End with our breathing prayer, the Lord's Prayer or another prayer from your heart.

Close your prayer time by thanking God for calm, quiet, hope or trust.

DAILY DEVOTIONAL WEEK TWO

DAY ONE: Proud & Haughty

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 131:1, CSB

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.

CONSIDER:

- What does it mean to be proud & haughty?

²² Thomas Keating, *Open Mind, Open Heart*.

- What does it mean to be involved in “things too great or too wondrous for me?”
- Where do you see pride and arrogance in your life?
- How does your pride and arrogance shape your relationship with God and others?

QUOTE: Read the adapted quote from Bernard P. Robinson from *Form and Meaning in Psalm 131*.

JOURNAL: Take time to confess and surrender your pride and arrogance to God. Admit how you attempted to seek personal greatness and glory.

READ: Psalm 131:1, CSB

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.

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

BREATHE: Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

DAY TWO: Personal Prosperity vs God's Will

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 131:1, CSB

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.

QUOTE: Read adapted quote from Bernard P. Robinson from *Form and Meaning in Psalm 131*.

READ: Luke 12:16-21, The Parable of the Rich Fool,

CONSIDER:

- How does this man embody a proud heart and haughty eyes?
- How do his actions portray a person attempting to be involved with things too great or wondrous?

- What was the consequence for his arrogance? Do you think this consequence was appropriate?
- What do you think Jesus is attempting to teach through this parable?

READ: James 4:13-16.

CONSIDER:

- What similarities do you find between this passage and the Parable of the Rich Fool?
- Does this passage teach us that it is wrong to make future plans?
- What might be the problem with declaring your plans for the future? How could that be considered arrogance?
- Why is it important to remember “the Lord’s will” when making plans?
- How might having this perspective allow us to avoid a proud heart and haughty eyes?

MEDITATE: Read Jeremiah 29:11 and spend some time meditating on the truth that God has plans for you that are beyond your control.

JOURNAL: Take some time to write about your plans for the future and confess your pride and arrogance in making these plans. Surrender your plans to God, seeking his will over your own.

BREATHE: Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

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

DAY THREE: Why God?

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

QUOTE: Read adapted quote from Bernard P. Robinson from *Form and Meaning in Psalm 131*.

READ: Psalm 131:1, CSB

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.

CONSIDER:

- What are things that you like to have control over? Why?
- What are some things you wish you could control, but are unable to?
- What are ways that you become overly involved with things that are beyond you?

REFLECT: Think of a recent time where you were striving to “to seek self-aggrandizement and glory.” How did that feel in the short term? How did it feel in the long term? How did it affect your relationship with others? How did it affect your relationship with God?

READ: Psalm 139:23-24(NIV)

*Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

MEDITATE: Read Psalm 139:23-24 five times, pausing each time to allow God to search your heart and test your thoughts.

JOURNAL: Write down anything that God brought to your mind while meditating on this passage. What was discovered in this search? What is making you anxious? What offensive ways need to be confessed?

BREATHE: Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

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

DAY FOUR: Looking to the Mountains

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 131:1, CSB

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.

QUOTE: Read adapted quote from Bernard P. Robinson from *Form and Meaning in Psalm 131*.

CONSIDER:

- When life is uncertain, where, aside from God, do you look for help?
- What assistance are you expecting to find?
- Does the assistance meet your expectation? Why or why not?
- Where should we look for help? Why?

READ: Psalm 121:1

I lift my eyes toward the mountains. Where will my help come from?

QUOTE:

In the ancient days, looking toward the mountains was a chance to seek protection from something greater than ourselves. Mountains were places that you could run to in times of trouble. They often contained fortresses to protect people from invaders. Mountains also often contained shrines for pagan idols where worshipers could look to and cry out for deliverance. When we look to the mountains expecting help, we are relying on the strength of our structures or our man-made gods. It is in our pride and arrogance that we look to the mountains in search for hope.

INTERACT: Read all of Psalm 121. Underline descriptors of the Lord. Choose one that stands out to you and circle it.

WRITE: Artfully write your chosen descriptor here.

CONSIDER:

- Why is this descriptor meaningful to you?
- How does this characteristic remind you to do away with pride and arrogance?

MEDITATE: Recite this to yourself three times.

*I lift my eyes toward the mountains. Where will my help come from?
Lord, my heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty.
My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.
Put your help in the Lord, both now and forever more.*

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

BREATHE: Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

DAY FIVE: The Cure for Pride and Arrogance

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

QUOTE: Read adapted quote from Bernard P. Robinson from *Form and Meaning in Psalm 131*.

READ: Psalm 131:1-2a, 3

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... Put your hope in the Lord, now and forever.

PONDER: The cure for our pride and arrogance is surrender. We surrender control to God when you calm your heart and quiet your soul, hope in the Lord, trust now and always. This is a continual process of submission to God and reliance on his direction for your life.

INTERACT: Read Proverbs 3:5-7 and highlight words, phrases, ideas that connect with Psalm 131.

CONSIDER:

- What does this proverb say about our heart, our eyes and our understanding?
- What does this proverb instruct us to do with our heart, eyes, and understanding?
- How does this connect with what Psalm 131 says about heart, eyes, and understanding?
- What might this psalm say to the proud and arrogant?
- How can reflecting on this proverb help calm your heart and quiet soul?

MEDITATE: Read this Scripture Mash-up three times. Reflect on your spiritual journey, where you have been, where you are, and where God is leading you.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, my heart is not proud

Don't be wise in your own eyes; my eyes are not haughty

Don't rely on your own understanding; I do not get involved with things too wondrous for me.

In all your ways know him, I have calmed and quieted my soul

Put your hope in the Lord, and he will make my paths straight.

ART INTERPRETATION: “He will make your paths straight”

On the next page, draw a windy path that turns and ends straight. Think of the turns along the windy path that represent times you leaned on your own understanding. If you think of specific turns, label them or add illustrations to symbolize those moments. Think about how those moments were led by a proud heart, haughty eyes, and personal ambition.

Reflect on the moment the path begins to straighten, when you surrendered your ways to God. Label or add illustrations to symbolize that moment. Add any other images, flourishes, verses, words, memories to make this image personal.

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

BREATHE: Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

ART INTERPRETATION:

“He will make your paths straight”