

**WEEK THREE
ADULT SMALL GROUP
CALM AND QUIET
LEADER GUIDE**

Instead I have calmed and quieted my soul.

THEME: This week we look at the first half of verse 2, “Instead I have calmed and quieted my soul.” In the midst of the chaos of life, we have a choice. We can allow the chaos to control our lives and wreak havoc on our soul, or we can invite Jesus to calm our heart and quiet our soul.

ICEBREAKER: Each week the discussion begins with a question, allowing the group to share from their own personal experiences.

Icebreaker Question: Where do you like to go to find calm and quiet? (either past or present)

QUOTE: Charles Spurgeon

Psalm 131 “is one of the shortest Psalms to read, but one of the longest to learn. It speaks of a young child, but it contains the experience of a man in Christ. Lowliness and humility are here seen in connection with a sanctified heart, a will subdued to the mind of God, and a hope looking to the Lord alone. Happy is the man who can, without falsehood, use these words as his own; for he wears about him the likeness of his Lord, who said, “I am meek and lowly in heart.”¹

PRAYER: 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. Amen.

OPTIONAL DISCUSSION: WEEK TWO IN REVIEW

Using the supplemental guide, discuss with the group their experiences with week two devotional on pride, ambition, and arrogance. Share experiences with Lectio Divina and the artistic expression of Life’s Path.

INSTEAD:

READ: Psalm 131:2a “*Instead* I have calmed and quieted my soul”

DEFINITION: Instead

- A preferred alternative or a replacement in place of something else.
- Suggests that of the choices available, one is favored.
- Asks us to choose the preferred over the popular.

POPULAR vs. PREFERRED

SAY: In Psalm 131 we see that the popular choice might be pride and arrogance, but the preferred is to calm and quiet.

¹ Spurgeon, Charles

DISCUSS

- Why is pride and arrogance the popular option?
- Why is a calm and quiet soul preferred?
- Which do you tend to lean toward?

QUOTE: David Guzik

Instead of proud pursuits, [the Psalmist] is determined to find satisfaction and serenity of soul, content with God and His works.²

OPTION: WEEK THREE VIDEO DISCUSSION: INSTEAD

In this week's video, Dave dives deeper into the concept of "Instead" and how following God is the preferred choice in order to find calm, quiet, hope, and trust. Use the supplemental guide to process this theme more intensely.

A CALM AND QUIET SOUL

READ: Psalm 131:2a "Instead I have calmed and quieted my soul"

DISCUSS:

- What is a calm and quiet soul and how does one acquire it?
- Would you say that your soul is calm and quiet? Why or why not?
- What do you do to try and calm and quiet yourself? Does it work?
- What keeps you from fully reaching a state of calm and quiet?
- How do you think the psalmist is able to claim that in their life?

QUOTE: Charles Spurgeon

"It is no easy thing to quiet yourself: sooner may a man calm the sea, or rule the wind, or tame a tiger, then quiet himself. We are **clamorous, uneasy, petulant**; and nothing but grace can make us quiet under **afflictions, irritations, and disappointments.**"³

DISCUSS:

- Have you ever felt "clamorous, uneasy, petulant" during difficult times?
- How do you typically respond to afflictions, irritations, and disappointments?

SAY: Spurgeon's words embody our struggles. We are clamorous, uneasy, petulant people under afflictions, irritations, and disappointments. There are so many things that keep us from quiet. There are the internal voices; our thoughts and emotions that make us *clamorous, uneasy, petulant*. There are also those things outside of us, our external *afflictions, irritations, and disappointments* that fuel our chaotic lives.

DISCUSS:

- What are some external elements that keep from quieting our soul?
- What are some of the internal conflicts that keep us from quieting our soul?

OPTION: JESUS CONNECTION: Jesus Calms the sea.

This week we will explore how Jesus calmed the sea and brought calm, and how he can calm the chaos of our hearts to bring us to calm, quiet, hope, and trust.

Use the supplemental guide to process this theme more intensely.

² *The Enduring Word Bible Commentary by David Guzik*

³ Surgeon, Charles

FIX OUR EYES:

SAY: The author of Hebrews puts a different perspective on these external and internal forces that keep us from finding calm and quiet; “everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.”

READ HEBREWS 12: 1 (NIV)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.

SAY: The things that hinders, external forces that keep us from calm and quiet, are our afflictions, irritations, and disappointments. While the r sin that entangles, internal desires that pull us from God, leads us to being *clamorous, uneasy, petulant*

DISCUSS:

- How do our internal thoughts and emotions keep us from finding calm? What role does sin play?
- How do our external situations fuel our chaotic lives? What things in our lives hinder us from calm?

QUOTE: Charles Spurgeon

“It is no easy thing to quiet yourself: sooner may a man calm the sea, or rule the wind, or tame a tiger, then quiet himself. We are clamorous, uneasy, petulant; and **nothing but grace** can make us quiet under afflictions, irritations, and disappointments.”⁴

DISCUSS

- How can grace from God and grace for ourselves help lead us to quiet?
- How can God’s grace help us quiet our souls during afflictions, irritations, and disappointments?

READ HEBREWS 12: 1-2 (NIV)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.

DISCUSS:

- How does “fixing our eyes on Jesus” help us calm and quiet our soul?
- How can keeping our eyes on Jesus keep up from being clamorous, uneasy, and petulant?
- What is keeping you from fixing your eyes on Jesus?

READ MATTHEW 14: 25-33: Peter Walks on Water.

25 Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost,” they said, and cried out in fear.

27 But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

28 “Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.”

29 “Come,” he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water, and came toward Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!”

31 Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”

32 And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down.

DISCUSS:

- When did Peter experience a calm and quiet soul?
- What happened when he took his eyes off Jesus?
- How does keeping our eyes on Jesus during storms of life help us experience calm and quiet? (Leaders: Provide and solicit examples in your lives)

⁴ Spurgeon, Charles

SAY: Amid chaos, Jesus comes walking. Peter follows suit as he keeps his eyes on Jesus he can walk on water. But becomes easily distracted and begins to drown. How do we experience calm and quiet? We fix our eyes on Jesus. The waves of the world will try and distract and drown us. It is easy to feel alone and afraid. It is then that we often take our eyes from Jesus and start to sink.

PATHS FOR THE JOURNEY:

Leaders: Here are a few options for continuing your journey together. Choose the option that best fits your group in the time provided. Once you have completed one option, either wrap up your time with the closing prayer or do an additional activity below.

- **Week Two Review:** Talk about last week's devotional on pride, ambition, and arrogance, artistic expression: Life Path, and Lectio Divina prayer.
 - **Video Discussion:** Join Dave Reiss and he unpacks how Psalm 131:1 and talks about the theme of Instead.
 - **Jesus Connection:** Jesus calms the sea and offers to calm the chaos in our hearts to quiet our clamorous souls.
 - **Prayer Practice:** Every week you are invited to participate in a spiritual prayer practice. This week is the Ignatian Contemplation, or imaginative prayer. Take some time to review this prayer practice as a group.
 - **The Week Ahead:** Each week you are invited to take your journey home, engaging in a weekly devotional, music, prayer, art, and more. This week we dive deeper into what it means to calm and quiet our soul with God.
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CLOSING TIME:

QUOTE: Eugene Peterson

Being a Christian means accepting God as our maker and redeemer, and growing day by day into increasingly glorious creatures in Christ, developing joy, experiencing love, maturing in peace. By the grace of Christ, we experience the marvel of being made in the image of God... The soul, clamoring for attention and arrogantly parading its importance, is calmed and quieted so that it can be itself, truly.⁵

CLOSING PRAYER: Psalm 131 (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. Instead, I have calmed and quieted my soul like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like a weaned child. Put your hope in the Lord, both now and forever. Amen

⁵ Peterson, Eugene. *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*. Pg. 147-148