

POETIC EXPRESSION

WEEK FIVE

A SONG OF HOPE AND MATURITY

THEME: This week we examine Psalm 131 as a song, lulling listeners to grow into maturity by placing their hope in Jesus.

WATCH VIDEO: *Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust. Episode 5: Understanding Poetry?*
Watch this week's video before the small group gathering.

CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS:

- Why is it important to remember that Psalm 131 is a poem and a song?
- How do poems and songs shape the understanding of our faith?
- Why does poetic expression show that we are part of the human race, created in the image of God?

WEEK FIVE

DISCUSSION GUIDE

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

Icebreaker Question: What is one of your favorite songs, and what makes it meaningful for you?

Additional Discussion Questions:

- Why are songs meaningful?
- How do songs connect us to our past?
- How do they motivate us for the future?

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL DISCUSSION:

- What did you discover about the process of spiritual maturity?
- What is the danger of never maturing in faith?
- How can we mature while remaining childlike?

- Share artistic expression.
- Share your experience with Lectio Divina. How did the practice of Divine Reading create a deeper connection to Psalm 131?

PRAYER: Imagine yourself laying down to rest, calming your heart, quieting your soul. Hear these words as they are sung to you as a tender, sweet lullaby.

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.

VIDEO DISCUSSION:

- According to Dead Poets Society, “we read and write poetry because we are part of the human race.” Has reading or writing poetry ever connected you to others or God in a deep or intimate way?
- How do poems and songs shape the understanding of our faith and the human race?
- How does examining Psalm 131 from different perspectives deepen your understanding of this song?

QUOTE: H. Stephen Shoemaker
Psalm 131 is a lullaby. It is a tender and intimate nightsong.⁴⁰ (Shoemaker, 89)

Discuss:

- Have you, or someone you love, ever had trouble sleeping?
- What is the purpose of a lullaby? How can it help a person sleep?
- How might Psalm 131 be considered a lullaby or nightsong?

Quote: H. Stephen Shoemaker
Psalm 131 is a lullaby. It is a tender and intimate nightsong. It is the song of a troubled heart being given the peace that passes understanding. If we could pray it as our own, perhaps we would sleep better at night.⁴¹

Discuss:

- How might Psalm 131 bring nighttime peace to a troubled heart?

⁴⁰ Shoemaker, Stephen. *Psalm 131*. Pg 89

⁴¹ Ibid. 89.

- How might this song help you “sleep better at night?”
- Has it brought peace to your heart? How so?

QUOTE: H. Stephen Shoemaker

But this lullaby is not for children only, and it is not only for those who have been given a basic sense of trust by the grace of good parenting those first eighteen months of life. It is a song of mature faith.⁴²

Discuss:

- Have you ever considered lullabies serving adults?
- Shoemaker suggests that this is a lullaby for people with a mature faith. How might Psalm 131 hold the characteristics of both a lullaby and a mature faith?
- What does a mature faith look like, as embodied in this psalm?

Quote: H. Stephen Shoemaker

Psalm 131 is a tender and intimate song. It is simple but not simplistic. It displays childlike trust, but it is not childish. It is not sung this side of trouble; it has walked through it. It is a song of mature faith.⁴³ (Shoemaker 91-92).

Discuss:

- Would you consider Psalm 131 tender and intimate? Why or why not?
- According to Shoemaker, a mature faith can be simple and childlike, while not simplistic or childish. How can a Psalm 131 faith be simple (but not simplistic), and childlike (but not childish)?
- How can this psalm be simple and childlike, yet a song of mature faith?

QUOTE: H. Stephen Shoemaker

This psalm pictures the simplicity on the yonder side of complexity, not on this side of complexity. Simplicity this side of complexity is only simplistic; it is not childlike, it is childish. The simplicity which has traveled through complexity to the yonder side, however, is the spiritual simplicity of mature faith.⁴⁴

QUOTE: H. Stephen Shoemaker

A mature faith seeks to trust God and have hope in the midst of these crises as we discover personal self-limitation, the intransigence of society, and the tragic dimensions of life.⁴⁵

⁴² Ibid 91

⁴³ Ibid 90-91

⁴⁴ Ibid 91

⁴⁵ Ibid 92

Discuss:

- Shoemaker wrestles with the journey from “this side” to “yonder side” of complexity. How does journeying through trouble mature our faith?
 - How might traveling through complexity simplify faith?
 - How does this relate to what we see in Psalm 131? How does it give a deeper understanding of this psalm?
 - How does crisis lead to hope, trust, and maturity?
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**THE WEEK AHEAD:
EXPLORING PSALM 131 IN NEW WAYS**

This week you are invited to look at Psalm 131 from a fresh perspective. During your daily devotional you will read a different translation and consider what words or phrases stand out, why they are significant, how they enhance this psalm. The purpose of doing this is to expand your understanding and appreciation of Psalm 131. Today we will examine the King James Version. During your weekly devotional you will look at the Complete Jewish Bible, The Voice Translation, the Message, and the Expanded Bible.

READ: Psalm 131 - King James Version

Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty:
neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.
Surely I have behaved and quieted myself,
as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child.
Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and forever.

Discuss:

- What words or phrases stand out to you in this translation?
- Why are those phrases significant?
- How do they enhance your connection to this psalm?

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: Ideaphoria

This week we will break down Psalm 131 word for word in an exercise called Ideaphoria. This is done by brainstorming synonyms, thoughts and ideas for each word in the psalm. As you brainstorm, write down any word, thoughts, or ideas, no matter how simple, strange or mundane. Once you have listed your thoughts over a particular word, move on to the next.

Practice: (Psalm 131:3a)

PUT YOUR HOPE IN THE LORD

INTERACT: Highlight the word or phrase in each section that you best connect with. Use those selected phrases to help you write the line in your own words.

ARTISTIC EXPRESSION:

This week you will write your own version of Psalm. In doing this, you are joining the choir as they sing this song, finding your harmony that joins your voice to the heart of the psalmist, and blending your voice with others as we share our verses together. As you consider how to write Psalm 131, I want to encourage you to allow your current situation to fuel your voice.

QUOTE: William R. Nicoll

The Psalmist closes his tender snatch of a song with a call to them to hope in the Lord, whereby they, too, may enter into peace... The secret of forgiveness and deliverance from iniquities is also the secret of rest from tyrannous longings and disturbing desires. Hope in God brings pardon, purity, and peace.⁴⁶

CLOSING PRAYER: Psalm 131, Dave's version written in February 2020

Restless heart, don't be arrogant.
Don't set your sights on things beyond you,
things beyond your control
Weary soul, don't get caught up in selfish ambition,
the rat race, striving for upward mobility,
trying to be bigger than you are.
What you should do is calm your heart,
Be calm, and quiet your soul, rest.
Like a baby sleeping on their parent's lap, be at peace.
Place your hope firmly on God, your father.
Trust in Him today, tomorrow, and for all eternity.

⁴⁶ William R. Nicoll: The Expositor's Commentary