

PRACTICE AND DEVOTIONAL WEEK SIX

Hope in the Lord

OVERVIEW:

This is our final week in our pilgrimage together. We have journeyed through the Psalms of ascent, confessed our proud hearts and haughty eyes, calmed and quieted our souls, examined a maturing faith, and rewritten this short psalm in our own words. For our final week's devotional, we will focus on the last verse of Psalm 131: Israel, put your hope in the Lord, now and forever.

Charles Spurgeon writes, "Psalm 131:3 is a lesson of experience: a person of God who had been taught to renounce the world and live upon the Lord alone, here exhorts his friends and companions to do the same. He found it a blessed thing to live by hope, and therefore he would have all his kinsmen through the same. Let all the nation hope. Let all their hope be in Jehovah, let them at once begin hoping and let them continue hoping."⁵³

In this week's video, we talk about the six questions in the reporter's formula: who, what, where, when, how, and why. In our daily devotions, we will ask these same questions and explore the answers together. Who is our Israel? What is hope? Where should we place our hope? When should we hope in the Lord? Why should we hope in the Lord? And how should we hope in the Lord?

ARTISTIC EXPRESSION:

In our final week, create something that encapsulates your pilgrimage through Psalm 131. What has God taught you on this journey? Draw or paint a picture, create a video, compose music, write a poem. Allow the Holy Spirit to move through you and use your gifts and talents as a form of worship.

When you are finished, find a place to display your creation to remind you of this pilgrimage. Place it somewhere private as a reminder of all that God has taught you. Or place it somewhere for others to see, in order to share with them your spiritual journey.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: The Prayer of Examen

The *Prayer of Examen* is a centering prayer that invites the participant to review the previous day and prepare for the next. This practice is often done either at the start or end of the day as a chance to reflect on what has happened, and to ready yourself for what lies ahead. You will walk through four steps of calm, quiet, hope, and trust.

As you participate in the *Prayer of Examen*, pay attention to your daily spiritual journey. Repeat this practice for at least three consecutive days at three times, starting at the same time each day. Notice any patterns: Where did you see God at work? Where did you let your pride get in the way? What are some of your patterns of control or surrender?

⁵³Spurgeon, Charles

Step 1: Calm

For the first step, calm your heart as you spend time with God. Take a few minutes and practice our breathing prayer as you come into God's presence.

Breathe: Calm your heart. Quiet your soul. Hope in the Lord. Trust now and always. Calm. Quiet. Hope, Trust.

Step 2: Quiet

For the second step, invite God to turn down the volume in your soul. Take some time to ponder the noise in your life and spend time in the quiet.

Ponder: What is making your heart restless? What is weighing down your soul? What noises in your head are keeping you from being quiet?

Share: Tell God the noise of your soul. Give to God the loud voices that make it difficult to hear his voice. Ask God to quiet your soul.

Step 3: Hope

For the third step, examine your hopes and failures of the previous day. Reflect on the various aspects of the previous 24 hours, considering how you have seen God move and ways that you have fallen short. It can be difficult to admit our shortcomings. Find hope in the amazing grace of God.

Reflect: What were your hopes for the past 24 hours? How did you see God move in your life and the lives of others? What were some mistakes that you made?

Confess: What were some areas where you placed your hope in things other than God? Admit your need for God's grace.

Step 4: Trust

In the final step, prepare for the day ahead. Trust in God's direction for the new day and seek his guidance for the journey ahead of you.

Consider: What do you have coming up in the next 24 hours? In what areas do you trust God's direction? What areas are you trying to control?

Surrender: Offer God your plans. Ask him to guide you in the day ahead. Trust that he has your best interest at heart.

Breathe: Calm your heart. Quiet your soul. Hope in the Lord. Trust now and always. Calm. Quiet. Hope, Trust.

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

DAY ONE: WHO

Israel, put your hope in the Lord, now and forever.

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 of Psalm 131.

REFLECT:

- What are some of the things you have learned during our pilgrimage of Psalm 131?
- How has God worked through this study to change your heart and help you grow in faith?

MEDIATE: Read Psalm 131:3 3-5 times.

Israel, put your hope in the Lord, now and forever.

WHO? The Psalmist shares his journey away from pride and arrogance and into the calm and quiet arms of God. The Psalm ends with a challenge for Israel, the Psalmist wants to encourage the people of God to put their hope in the Lord.

QUOTE:

Psalm 131:3 is a lesson of experience: a person of God who had been taught to renounce the world and live upon the Lord alone, here exhorts his friends and companions to do the same. He found it a blessed thing to live by hope, and therefore he would have all his kinsmen through the same. Let all the nation hope. Let all their hope be in Jehovah, let them at once begin hoping and let them continue hoping.⁵⁴

CONSIDER:

- Who is your Israel?
- Who are the people in your life who need to hear the message of Calm, Quiet, Hope, Trust?
- What are the things keeping them from placing their hope in Jesus?
- How can you provide an example to them?

⁵⁴ Spurgeon, Charles

PRAY: Spend some time praying for specific people in your life, that they can place their hope in the Lord. Ask God to use you as an example of Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

MUSIC: Listen to Psalm 131 by Waterdeep. Every time she sings “Israel” think of someone who needs to hear the message of Calm, Quiet, Hope, Trust.

BREATHE: Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

DAY TWO: WHAT & WHERE

Israel, put your hope in the Lord, now and forever.

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 of Psalm 131.

MEDIATE: Read Psalm 131:3 3-5 times.

Israel, put your hope in the Lord, now and forever.

CONSIDER:

- How do you define hope?
- How is worldly hope different than godly hope?

QUOTES:

The word hope in English is rather weak. To hope means to want something without certainty, but the Greek word underlying it means conviction. Christian hope is not a hopeful wish; it is hope filled certainty.⁵⁵ (Tim Keller)

Christian hope is not uncertain, like our ordinary everyday hopes about the weather or health; it is a joyful and confident expectation which rests on the promises of God.⁵⁶ (John Stott)

CONSIDER:

How do Keller’s and Stott’s thoughts on hope expand your understanding, meaning, and purpose of Christian hope?

QUOTE:

“Psalm 131:3 is a lesson of experience: a person of God who had been taught to renounce the world and live upon the Lord alone, here exhorts his friends and companions to do the same. He found it a blessed thing to live by hope, and therefore he would have all his kinsmen through the same. Let all the nation hope. Let all their hope be in Jehovah, let them at once begin hoping and let them continue hoping.”⁵⁷ (Charles Spurgeon)

⁵⁵ Keller, Timothy: Romans 1-7 For You, page 111

⁵⁶ Stott, John: The Message of Romans, 140

⁵⁷ Spurgeon, Charles

CONSIDER:

- What do people put their hope in other than God?
- What do they expect to achieve by placing hope in those things?
- How may the psalmist's experience compel him to encourage his kinsmen to hope in the Lord?
- How can putting hope in the Lord transform lives? How can it calm hearts and quiet souls?

READ: Romans 15:13(NIV)

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

JOURNAL: Confess what you put your hope in that is not from God. Ask God that His hope will overflow in your heart and life. Bring to God the people in your life who need hope, and ask that they would experience joy and peace as they trust in Him.

MUSIC: Listen to Psalm 131 by Waterdeep.

BREATHE: Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

DAY 3: WHEN & HOW:

Israel, put your hope in the Lord, now and forever.

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 of Psalm 131.

MEDIATE: Read Psalm 131:3 below, three to five times. Line two is from the Message translation.

*Israel, put your hope in the Lord, now and forever.
Wait, for God. Wait with hope. Hope now; hope always!*

CONSIDER: How does waiting connect with hope?

INTERACT: Read Psalm 130. Highlight each reference to God (Lord, you, etc). Circle each reference to the psalmist (I, my, etc). Underline all the references to waiting and hope. Draw connections between Psalm 130 & 131.

JOURNAL: What are you waiting for God to do in your life, your family, your heart? How are you handling the waiting process? Reflect on God's faithful love in your life and ask for patience to wait in hope.

QUOTE: John Stott

Some Christians overemphasize the call to patience. They lack enthusiasm and lapse into lethargy, apathy and pessimism. They have forgotten God's promises and they are guilty of unbelief. Others grow impatient with waiting. They are so carried away with enthusiasm that they almost try to force God's hand. They are determined to experience now even what is not available yet.⁵⁸

CONSIDER:

- How do you respond when you are called to patiently wait in hope?
- Are you prone to apathy or impatience? Why?
- How are both an inappropriate response to waiting in hope?

PRAY: Confess your impatience and ask God to help you to wait with hope.

MUSIC: Listen to Psalm 131 by Waterdeep. When she sings "I have calmed and quieted my soul," remember that you are called to wait patiently for the Lord.

BREATHE: Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

DAY 4: HOW & WHY?

Faithful love brings redemption in abundance. (Psalm 130: 7)

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 of Psalm 131.

MEDIATE: Prayerfully read this excerpt from Psalm 130:7-8 three to five times.

*Put your hope in the Lord, for there is faithful love
With him is redemption in abundance.
He will redeem you from all your iniquities.*

⁵⁸ John Stott: The Message of Romans, 244

CONSIDER:

- How does knowing God's faithful love help you place your faith in the Lord?
- How does God's abundant redemption remind us that only God is worthy of our hope?

QUOTE: Eugene Peterson

Hoping is based on the conviction that God is actively involved in his creation and vigorously at work in redemption. Hoping does not mean doing nothing. It is not fatalistic resignation. It means going about our assigned tasks confident that God will provide the meaning and conclusions. It is not compelled to work away at keeping up appearances with bogus spirituality. It is the opposite of desperate and panicky manipulation, of scurrying and worrying. And hoping is not dreaming. It is not spinning an illusion or fantasy to protect us from our boredom or our pain. It means a confident, alert expectation that God will do what he says he will do. It is imagination put in the harness of faith. It is a willingness to let God do it his way and in his time.⁵⁹

INTERACT: Read Romans 5: 1-5. Circle every reference to hope. Write out the path from suffering (affliction, trials, etc) to hope. Compare that to the path from testing to maturity found in James 1:2-4.

PONDER: We often think that going through difficult times is some form of punishment, and we avoid them as much as possible. Perhaps we need to change our perspective and realize that God can use our difficult journeys to rid us of pride and arrogance, wean us from a childish faith, and to build a foundation of hope, now and always.

JOURNAL: How does going through a difficult situation help you place your hope in the Lord? Reflect on a difficult situation you went through and how it helped you mature in faith and strengthen your hope in future situations.

QUOTE: Eugene Peterson

We need hope. We need to know that we are in relation to God. We need to know that suffering is a part of what it means to be human and not something alien. We need to know where we are and where God is.⁶⁰

REST: *Put your hope in the Lord for there is faithful love and redemption in abundance.*

MUSIC: Listen to Psalm 131 by Waterdeep.

BREATHE: Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.

⁵⁹ Eugene Peterson, Long Obedience in the Same Direction, pg 144

⁶⁰ Eugene Peterson, Long Obedience in the Same Direction, pg 144-145

DAY FIVE: WRAP-UP

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 the *Psalm 131* chant by John Michael Talbot & Psalm 131 by the Orchardist

READ: 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.*

REVIEW: Look over your notes from the past six weeks. Reflect on where you were at the start of our pilgrimage and what God has taught you during the journey. What were some of the things God taught you during our travels? Contemplate what steps you need to take to calm your heart, quiet your soul, hope in the Lord, and trust always.

CONSIDER:

- How has this pilgrimage helped you calm your heart?
- How has this pilgrimage helped you quiet your soul?
- How has this pilgrimage helped you hope in the Lord?
- How has this pilgrimage helped you trust now and always?

WRITE: Write a letter to yourself about the journey. Share with yourself some of the things that God has taught you, and some of the ways you hope this will shape your life and faith. Invite yourself to return to the journey in the future and who you would consider inviting to join you.

QUOTE: Eugene Peterson

Psalm 131 nurtures a quality of calm confidence and quiet strength that knows the difference between unruly arrogance and faithful aspiration, knows how to discriminate between infantile dependency and childlike trust, and chooses to aspire and to trust.⁶¹

⁶¹ Eugene Peterson, *Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, pg 158

MEDITATE: Spend a few minutes silently reflecting on these words.

Lord, my heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty.

Calm my heart. So I do not get involved with things too great or too wondrous for me.

Instead, I have calmed and quieted my soul.

Quiet my soul like a weaned child with its mother; make my soul is like a weaned child.

Help me to hope in the Lord, O Lord, I put my hope in You,

May I trust in you, now and always, both now and forever

MUSIC: Listen to *Psalm 131* by Waterdeep and *Psalm 131 (Come to the Quiet)* by John Michael Talbot.

BREATHE: Calm. Quiet. Hope. Trust.