

WEEK FOUR
ADULT SMALL GROUP
CHILDLIKE MATURITY
PARTICIPANT GUIDE

THEME: Verse 2 compares our soul to a weaned child. As God’s children, we find comfort and contentment in Jesus, but when we are weaned through trials, we grow in maturity and develop a long-lasting trust.

ICEBREAKER: *What is something that you would have a difficult time giving up, even if it meant a better and/or healthier life?*

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 person in Christ.” - Charles Spurgeon

PRAYER: Psalm 131

Lord, my heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty. I do not get involved with things too great or 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

“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.”¹ - Eugene Peterson

PSALM 131: 2: I have calmed and quieted my soul like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like a weaned child.

TWO VIEWS ON VERSE 2

1: A child content after being fed, our souls find contentment in Jesus.

2: Weaning is a sign of maturity, leaving behind childish ways and developing trust.

VIEW 1: A Content Child

VARIOUS TRANSLATIONS:

But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a child quieted at its mother’s breast; like a child that is quieted is my soul. (Revised Standard Version)

I keep myself calm and quiet, like a little child on its mother’s lap — I keep myself like a little child. (Complete Jewish Bible)

No, right now I am calm and quiet, like a child after nursing, content in its mother’s arms. (Easy-to-Read Version)

Like a baby content in its mother’s arms, my soul is a baby content. (Message)

I composed and quieted my desire, like a child given suck by his mother; like a child who sucks is my desire within me. (Modern English Version)

- Which version do you connect with most?
- How does the image of a child content connect with the theme of calm, quiet, hope, trust?

“Once [our soul] was restless and fretful, a mere burden, exhausting him with this incessant demand, distracting him with peevish and opposed desires, but now it is come back to him quiet, peaceful, gentle”.² - Samuel Cox

¹ Peterson, Eugene. Long Obedience in the Same Direction, pg. 158

² Cox, Samuel. The Pilgrim Psalms

- Do you ever feel restless, fretful, exhausted, and distracted in your soul?
- How can returning to God bring comfort and nourishment during those times?

SONG “But I have calmed and quieted my soul before you. **Satisfied**, like a nursing child in your arms. **Satisfied**, I have quieted my soul in you.” - The Orchardist, Psalm 131

- What does a satisfied soul look like?
- How does coming to Jesus to satisfy bring calm and quiet to our souls?

VIEW 2: The Weaned Child

“The process of weaning may seem strange and terrible to the child, but it is necessary for the child’s development. The **weaned child** comes to realize that the denial of one of the mother’s gifts does not mean denial of the mother’s presence. He comes to love the mother herself instead of the gift received from her.”³ - *David Guzik*

- Why would the process of weaning seem “strange and terrible” to a child?
- Why is weaning important?
- How does this weaning process reshape the relationship between child and mother?

MILK:

1 Peter 2: 2-3 (NIV) Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

“Peter now describes the word of God as ‘pure *spiritual milk’. *Spiritual means linked to a person’s spirit and not to his or her physical body. A Christian should want God’s word as much as a baby wants milk. Milk makes a baby grow big and strong. A Christian should be eager to read and listen to God’s word. This will help them to become mature.”⁴ - **Helen Pocock**

- What is it important to crave “pure spiritual milk?”
- How does spending time in God’s Word help us grow and mature in faith and life?
- How does this milk comfort and satisfy our souls, as opposed to other ‘worldly’ cravings?
- Is there a danger in only having milk? When might “milk” become a deterrent to a person’s spiritual growth?

MEAT:

1 Corinthians 3:1-2 (NLT) Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you, I couldn’t talk to you as I would to spiritual people. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in Christ. 2 I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren’t ready for anything stronger. And you still aren’t ready.

- What is Paul’s frustration with the Christians on Corinth?
- Paul, as opposed to Peter, likens being fed spiritual milk to immaturity; why is that?
- Why is moving from milk to meat (solid food) important (physically & metaphorically)?
- What does this say about weaning and spiritual maturation?

“How hard the struggle had been, how much bitter crying and petulant resistance there had been before the calm was won, is told by the lovely image of the weaned child. While being weaned it sobs and struggles, and all its little life is perturbed. So, no one comes to have a quiet heart without much resolute self-suppression.”⁵ - *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*

- Why is the process of weaning so difficult, yet so important?

³ *Enduring Word Bible Commentary by David Guzik*

⁴ Pocock, Helen. Easy English Commentary www.easyenglish.bible/bible-commentary/1peter-lbw.htm

⁵ *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*

- Why do people fear or reject the weaning process?
- Why does spiritual weaning require “self-suppression” (self-surrender, self-sacrifice)?
- How does the process of spiritual weaning lead to a quiet heart?

“A child not-yet weaned embraces his mother with the thought of food and immediate satisfaction. A **weaned child** embraces his mother out of a desire for love, closeness, and companionship.”⁶ - David Guzik

- How does the weaning process reshape the relationship between child and mother (as opposed to mother and child)?
- How does the weaning process help us grow in our faith, and build a deeper connection with God and others?
- Why is it important to be continually maturing in our faith?

MATURITY

1 Corinthians 13:11-12 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put aside childish things. 12 For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, as I am fully known.

- Is it wrong for a child to behave like a child? Is it OK for an adult to be overly childish?
- What might be considered “childish” things of our faith that we must “put aside?” What are some ways that people are childish in faith, ways they decide to not grow or mature, refuse to practice what they believe?
- What does Psalm 131 teach us about putting childish things aside and growing in faith?

“We curb our pride, our concern for the strong, the powerful and heroic, and we remain quiet and content in God as a child who has been weaned from its mother, and who has begun to live freed from infantile demands and dependencies. We then call ourselves back to the real source of hope - God, and not ourselves.”⁷ - David Baker

Continue to Grow (adapted by Dave Reiss base off 1 Corinthians 13:11-13 & Psalm 131)

I was like a newborn baby; my heart was proud and my eyes haughty
 I craved pure spiritual milk of salvation, crying out for nourishment
 I was a child. I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child.
 But I needed to grow, I needed solid food.
 My soul was weaned, and I put aside childish things.
 I am learning to calm and quiet my soul, to place my hope in Him.
 I see only a small part, a dim reflection, but I continue to grow.
 I do not get involved with things too great or wondrous
 I don't know fully, but in him, I am fully known.
 I will put my hope in the Lord,
 for in him there is faithful love and redemption in abundance.
 Trust in Him, o my soul, continue to grow, both now and forever.

MAKE IT PERSONAL:

- What are some ways that you are living a childish faith, some things from which you need to be weaned to grow?
- How will getting rid of these childish things lead you to calm, quiet, hope, trust?
- What are some ways that you can continue to grow in your faith? What are some spiritual practices you can do? How can meeting in a community (small group) help?

⁶ *Enduring Word Bible Commentary* by David Guzik

⁷ Baker, David. *Voices for the Pilgrimage: A Study in the Psalms of Ascent*, pg. 125

CLOSING TIME:

“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—and to sing, “I’ve kept my feet on the ground, I’ve cultivated a quiet heart. Like a baby content in its mother’s arms, my soul is a baby content.”⁸ - Eugene Peterson

CLOSING 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.

⁸ Peterson, Eugene. Long Obedience in the Same Direction. pg. 158