

**WEEK FIVE
POETIC EXPRESSION
SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION
LEADER GUIDE**

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

NOTE: This lesson's structure is somewhat different from other lessons. It contains activities to help prepare group members to write their own version of Psalm 131, as either a poem or prayer. They will be asked to share their creation on week six

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 movie soundtracks? How does the songs or score bring life to the film?

QUOTE: H. Stephen Shoemaker
Psalm 131 is a lullaby. It is a tender and intimate nightsong.¹

SAY: This week we are examining Psalm 131 as a song that resonates with our hearts, and invites us to join in. It is a song of reflection and hope that speaks to where we have been, where we are at, and where we are going. It is a song that calms our hearts and quiets our souls so that we can hope in the lord and trust in Him now and always.

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

OPTIONAL DISCUSSION: WEEK FOUR IN REVIEW

Using the supplemental guide, discuss with the group their experiences with week four devotional on a childlike maturity. Share experiences with the Centering Prayer and the artistic expression from various stages of life.

QUOTE: H. Stephen Shoemaker
Psalm 131 is a lullaby. It is a tender and intimate nightsong.

DISCUSS: How might Psalm 131 be considered a lullaby that comforts our souls in the dead of the night?

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.²

DISCUSS:

- How might Psalm 131 bring peace to a troubled heart?
- How might this song help you "sleep better at night?"
- Has it brought peace to your heart? How so?

¹ Shoemaker, Stephen. *Psalm 131*. Pg. 89

² Ibid. 89.

Quote: H. Stephen Shoemaker

Psalm 131 is a tender and intimate song. But this lullaby is not for children only, 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.³ (Shoemaker 91-92).

DISCUSS:

- 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?
- 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 does walking through trouble help bring about maturity in 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. 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.⁴

DISCUSS: Shoemaker wrestles with the journey from “this side” to “yonder side” of complexity, which he believes leads us to simplicity and maturity.

- How does journeying through trouble (or complexity) simplify faith? How has life’s complexities simplified your faith? (Leaders, consider sharing a personal example)
- How might traveling through complexity mature our faith? How has life’s complexities matured your faith? (Leaders, consider sharing a personal example)
- How does complexity lead to calm, quiet, hope, trust? How has life’s complexities lead you to calm, quiet, hope, and trust? (Leaders, consider sharing a personal example)

OPTION: WEEK FIVE VIDEO DISCUSSION: POETIC EXPRESSION

In this week’s video, Dave shares about his love for Dead Poets Society and how we can gain a new perspective of this passage when we remember that it was written as both a poem and a song for worship for the people of Israel.

EXPLORING PSALM 131 IN NEW WAYS

POETIC EXPRESSION: (This week’s homework)

SAY: This week your challenge will write your own version of Psalm 131 in the form of a poem or prayer. In doing this, you are joining the eternal choir as they sing around God’s throne. Find your harmony and join your voice to the worship of God. Allow your life, personality, and emotions, to fuel your voice.

EXAMPLE: Here is an example from a previous group. Leaders: If it helps, share this with the group.

*Lord I am not impressed with myself
Nor should I see myself as someone who could ever accomplish things without You
I do not get somethings, so I quiet myself In place of strife.
I actively make my goal a heart that is calm and quiet shutting out the worlds relentless noise
I feel comfort like the comfort a child feels with their Mom. That is how I feel in my soul.
People of God put your expectation in our one true God, Today and Forever.⁵*

³ Ibid 90-91

⁴ Ibid 91-92

⁵ Reiss, Alexa. 2020

ALTERNATE VOICES:

SAY: This week in our pilgrimage through this tender and intimate lullaby we will view Psalm 131 from a new perspective to expand our understanding and appreciation of Psalm 131. We will read from different translations and consider how they enhance our journey. Together we will explore the classical, King James Version, as we ask ourselves the following questions; (1) what words or phrases stand out, (2) why are those words and significant to you, and (3) how do they enhance and enrich your connection to this psalm? During your weekly devotional you will look at the Complete Jewish Bible, The Voice Translation, the Message, and the Expanded Bible.

IMAGINE: (Leaders, invite your group to close their eyes and imagine the following scene)

Picture yourself in traditional Shakespearian theater. An actor comes to the front of the stage and stakes their stance, then begins to recite Psalm 131 with bravado.

READ TWICE: 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:

- As you read and listened to the King James Version of Psalm 131, what words or phrases stood out to you in this translation?
- Why are those words or phrases significant to you? Why do they resonate with you?
- How does this translation compare with our standard translation?
- How does the King James version enhance and enrich your connection to this psalm?

BRAINSTORM: Ideaphoria (look for a video to explain this process better)

This week we will break down Psalm 131 in a brainstorming activity known as 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 word, move on to the next. Once you have completed the activity, rewrite the line in your own words. You can choose words from your brainstorm or go in an entirely new direction.

PRACTICE: (Psalm 131:3a)

PUT YOUR HOPE IN THE LORD

*Examples: place mine trust inside singular Jesus
Insert personal expectation centered fixed Yahweh*

NEW LINE: (Teachers, encourage the class to each write their own version on Psalm 131:3a)

Example: Place your personal trust inside the singular God, Yahweh.

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 Three Review:** Discuss with the group their experiences with week four's devotional on a childlike, mature heart. Share experiences with the Centering Prayer the art stages process.
 - **Video Discussion:** In this week's video, Dave shares about his love for Dead Poets Society and how we can gain a new perspective of this passage when we remember that it was written as both a poem and a song for worship for the people of Israel.
 - **Jesus Connection:** Jesus meets a man whose son is possessed by a demon. The man asks, "*If you can, heal my son.*" Jesus' response turns into a cry that we can all resonate with, "I believe, help me overcome my unbelief.")
 - **The Week Ahead & Prayer Practice (Ideaphoria)** have been incorporated into this week's lesson to prepare for writing their own Psalm 131.
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QUOTE: H. Stephen Shoemaker

Psalm 131 is a lullaby. It is a tender and intimate night song.⁶

QUOTE: William R. Nicoll

The Psalmist closes this song with a call for the people of God to hope in the Lord; whereby they, too, may enter into peace. It is a song that reveals both a secret of forgiveness and deliverance from iniquities and is also the secret for rest from tyrannous longings and disturbing desires. Hope in God brings pardon, purity, and peace.⁷ Next week we will wrap up our journey together as we answer the call to put our hope in the Lord, now and always.

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 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

⁶ Shoemaker, Stephen. *Psalm 131*. Pg. 89

⁷ William R. Nicoll: *The Expositor's Commentary*