



SMALL GROUP GUIDE

WEEK TWO

PROUD & HAUGHTY

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This week we examine verse 1 of Psalm 131 and consider how the destructive path of the proud and arrogant is dissolved through trusting in God

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

- What is something you are an expert at?
- What is something in which you wish you were an expert?

OPENING 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

QUOTE: Eugene Peterson

Psalm 131 is a maintenance psalm. It is functional to the person of faith as pruning is functional to the gardener: it gets rid of that which looks good to those who don't know any better, it reduces the distance between our hearts and their roots in God.

- What is the purpose of pruning a plant?
- What is the purpose of God pruning our lives?
- What might God be wanting to prune in our lives through Psalm 131

SERMON DISCUSSION:

On Sunday, Pastor Dave Reiss began to unpack Psalm 131. Take some time to review the sermon, discussing the themes, application, and questions.

- What were some of lessons from Psalm 131 that were discussed during the sermons?
- How did these lessons connect with you and your spiritual life?
- How were you encouraged to apply the lessons from this psalm to your life?
- Share any questions or concerns that came to you have been wrestling with over the past few weeks.

READ VERSE 1:

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.

- What is your initial reaction when you read Psalm 131?
- Do you struggle to claim this verse in your life? Why?

This week we are focusing on verse one, which reminds us of the dangers of pride and arrogance. It shows our tendency to see ourselves as superior and desiring control by being involved in things beyond our understanding. Many people read verse one and give up. Can we ever honestly say that we are not proud or arrogant? Can this psalm be read any other way than tongue in cheek?

QUOTE: Matthew Henry

Some have made it an objection against singing this psalm, stating that we cannot say, 'My heart is not proud, my eyes are not haughty....' But we should sing this psalm for the same purpose that we read it; to teach and admonish ourselves and become what we ought to be.

- So many people want to move past this Psalm because the first verse seems impossible. How can verse one inspire us to become what we are not?
- Why do you think the psalmist needs to do away with a proud heart and haughty eyes?
- What would it take for you to say with confidence, "my heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty?"

PRIDE:

QUOTE: Eugene Peterson.

It is difficult to recognize pride as a sin when it is held up on every side as a virtue, urged as profitable and rewarded as an achievement. What is described in scripture as the basic sin, the sin of taking things into your own hands, being your own god, grabbing what is there while you can get it, is now described as basic wisdom: improve yourself by whatever means you are able; get ahead regardless of the price, take care of me first.

- How does Peterson define pride?
- How does culture define pride?
- What is the difference between the two?
- Do you agree or disagree that pride is seen as a virtue in our culture? Why?
- How does pride cause us to usurp authority from God?

SELFISH AMBITION

Haughty is not a word that we commonly use these days. Some commentators state that being haughty connects with selfish ambition, the desire to seek our own advancement before the good of others.

- What do you think the psalmist mean by haughty eyes?
- What is the problem with selfish ambition? How might it pose a threat to you and others?

QUOTE: from Exposition of the Bible, Volume 3

Lofty [haughty] thoughts of self, breed ambition... worldly ambition is aiming at prominence and position.

QUOTE: Eugene Peterson

Ambition is aspiration gone crazy. Aspiration is the channeled, creative energy that moves us to growth in Christ... Ambition takes these same energies for growth and development and uses them to make something tawdry and cheap.

- What is the difference between aspiration and ambition?
- When does aspiration become unhealthy?
- What is the danger of ambition?

PROVERBS:

While we often praise the proud and haughty, the Bible speaks of their peril. Pride leads us to believe that we know what is best, at first for ourselves and then for others. Soon we begin to think that we know better than God.

Proverbs 16:18, NIV

Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 21:4 (NIV)

Haughty eyes and a proud heart – the unplowed field of the wicked – produce sin.

- How does pride and arrogance lead to destruction? Can you think of examples?
- What type of sins do pride and arrogance produce?
- What negative effects have you seen come from pride and arrogance in your life?

ARROGANCE: I do not get involved with things too great or too wondrous for me. (Psalm 131:1b)

Pride leads us to believe that we know what is best, at first for ourselves and then for others. Soon we begin to think that we know better than God. We set our sights on things beyond our reach. In our ambition, we seek to stretch ourselves beyond our paygrade. This leads to arrogance, to thinking our way is best and becoming easily frustrated when things do not go according to our plan.

QUOTE: Bernard P. Robinson

When the Psalmist says to not get 'involved with things too great or too wondrous,' he is saying that we are not to seek self-aggrandizement and glory. Greatness and the marvelous pertain more to God than mankind. For us to go about these normally divine activities is to arrogate divine attributes to oneself.

- Why do we obsess with things beyond ourselves, things out of our reach or above our paygrade?
- When we choose to seek our own self-aggrandizement (promotion) and glory how does that shape our understanding of God and our relationship with others?
- How does seeking "Greatness and the marvelous" cause us to perceive ourselves as equals with God?

QUOTE: Stephen Shoemaker

The Psalmist has come through to say, 'I do not occupy myself with things too great or too marvelous for me.' It is the admission to the end of human wisdom. It says my knowledge alone cannot take me to you. It recognizes what a mature faith must – that trust is deeper than knowledge, deeper than theology.

- How does the admission that there are things beyond our understanding mature our faith, and deepen our trust, draw us closer to God?

THE RICH YOUNG RULER:

Once there was a young man who wanted to prove to others that he was a good person. Knowing that he was a rule follower he approached Jesus with confidence, expecting him to stroke his ego but he did not get what he expected.

Luke 18:18-27

A certain ruler asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

"Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good – except God alone. You know the commandments: 'You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.'"

“All these I have kept since I was a boy,” he said.

When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was very wealthy. Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

Those who heard this asked, “Who then can be saved?”

Jesus replied, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.”

- How did this young man approach Jesus with a sense of false humility? How did he display pride, ambition, and arrogance?
- How does Jesus point out this man’s false humility?
- What was the one thing he lacked? Was it more than a love for money? What do you think was the root of this man's unwillingness to surrender?
- How did his pride, ambition, and arrogance keep him from following Jesus? Why did he choose to walk away?
- What do you think his life was like after he left Jesus? Do you think he would have been happy or content in life?
- What do you think his life could have been if he obeyed and followed Jesus? How would he have discovered a calm heart and a quiet soul?

CLOSING QUOTE: Bernard Robinson

The Psalmist says ‘my heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty....’ he is speaking of the whole self...In that culture the heart would refer to his way of thinking and eyes to a way of looking at things, perspective. These two add up to a single thought, the renunciation of arrogance.

This week take time to consider the role that pride, ambition, and arrogance play in your daily life. When are those times that we think that our perspective is the right one, we demand our way and reject the views of others? In those moments, calm your heart and quiet your soul, put your hope in the Lord, and not your own understanding.

CLOSING PRAYER: Psalm 131

Psalm 131 (CSB)

Lord, my heart is proud and my eyes are haughty. I get involved with things greater than myself. I surrender control to you. Guide my spirit toward peace. Help me discover the calm and quiet of a weaned child. Lead me into maturity. I put my hope in you, for there is faithful love and redemption in abundance. I am trusting you to guide me both now and forever. Amen.