



SMALL GROUP GUIDE

WEEK FOUR
GROWING MATURITY

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This week we will examine the path of maturation, moving from spiritual infancy into maturity. God longs for us to grow and mature while maintaining childlike trust and dependency.

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

Icebreaker Questions:

- What was one of your favorite activities as a kid that you would never catch yourself doing now?
- Why did you love this activity?
- Why would you not do it now?

QUOTE: Charles Spurgeon

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.”

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

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. This week we are going to examine our journey through faith, through the metaphor of a person growing from a baby to maturity.

READ PSALM 131:2

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

VARIOUS TRANSLATIONS: Here are some ways different scholars have translated verse two. As you read these variations consider how they are similar and different and which version you connect with the most and why.

- ◇ *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)*

- What were some similarities and differences in these translations?
- Which version do you connect with most? Why?
- How does the image of a child content connect with the theme of calm, quiet, hope, trust?

QUOTE: *Long Obedience in the Same Direction* by 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.”

SERMON DISCUSSION:

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

- What were some of lessons of 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.

TWO VIEWS ON VERSE 2

There are two common translations of verse two. The **FIRST** is of a child resting contently after being fed, which symbolizes finding contentment in Christ. The **SECOND** is the concept of a weaned child, which is symbolic of our journey into maturity.

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.

This image of a child at rest, reminds us that we can be like infants, who fuss and cry, and the only way to find true contentment is in the arms of our heavenly father.

QUOTE: from *The Pilgrim Psalms* by Samuel Cox

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.

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

THE WEANED CHILD: Milk, Meat, Maturity

The more popular interpretation of this passage speaks of a weaned child. A child must learn to move from milk to meat into maturity. This process of growth is important if we are to fully live into calm, quiet, hope, and trust.

QUOTE: *David Guzik*

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.

- 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?

As a child grows, they move from **milk** to solid food, **meat**, this is a process of **maturity**. As Christians we are in a process of growing in our faith. A church word for this is sanctification, the process we go to become more like Christ and less like our sinful selves. We mature through spending time with God, both in the Scriptures (Word) and in prayer, connecting in Christian community, and relying on God through difficult situations.

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.

QUOTE: Helen Pocock

Peter 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.

- 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?

QUOTE: from the Expositor's Bible Commentary

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.

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

QUOTE: David Guzik

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.

- 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: Much like being on a pilgrimage, maturity is a process, not a destination. It is not a simple process, but one that is developed over time through a process of spiritual practice and experience.

READ: 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?
- 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?

CLOSING QUOTE: David Baker

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.

CLOSING PRAYER: *Imagining yourself at rest, content, on your Heavenly Father's lap.*

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.

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.