

Psalms: Tuning Our Hearts


Part 3

“How to Quiet Your Heart”

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

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Talk together about the glory of God’s kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- What’s the “noise level” within your heart? 
Mark this “decebel meter” with an “X” at the place that represents how noisy or quiet your heart is. What do you conclude? What do you think your spouse (or closest friend) would conclude?

- Take a moment now to complete the “Pride versus Humility Checklist” (found on the following pages).

Psalm 131 links a “noisy heart” to pride (self-absorption) and haughtiness (superiority towards others), which emboldens us to try to control the outcome of things which are beyond our ability to control. Which of those do you see in yourself? How have they contributed to an agitated, noisy heart?

Think of the last time you were agitated. What was the “great matter” with which you were concerned?

- When you’re agitated, what strategies do you typically use to quiet your heart?

In what ways are your strategies similar to, and different from, the one prescribed in Psalm 131?

Creating "God Space": "God Space" is where cynics, skeptics, and spiritually curious people can safely raise their questions, reservations, & doubts because we have listened well and demonstrated love in practical, authentic ways.

- Who do you know personally who suffers from a “noisy heart”?

How do you think they would react to the explanation Psalm 131 gives for their agitation?

Practice what you might say to explain the truths of Psalm 131 in ways they’d understand.

Suffering from a “Noisy Heart”?
Write to:

BiblicalHopeAndHelp@gmail.com

Application-Challenge

- Learn to recognize the insidious subtlety of pride and haughtiness in yourself.
- Repent of specific examples of pride and of the proud frame of mind which places self at the center.
- Actively and forcefully fix your hope on God alone (1 Peter 1:13), now and always (Psalm 131:3).

Sermon Summary

Each morning, it seems, we wake up to a new image of a shooting and of families and communities mourning. We see images of peaceful protests, and we see other images of buildings burning and stores being looted. The peace we say Christ brings seems to allude us. What is the “noise” going on inside you? What is the secret to gaining a quiet heart? In Psalm 131, David shows us how he became peaceful and composed inside, even when his life was messy on the outside. Psalm 131 also does not present us with a blissful, zen-like detachment. It’s not about having a laid-back personality or about retreating from life’s troubles. The quietness of Psalm 131 is not the quietness that comes from easy circumstances, from denying or ignoring difficulties. David’s quietness of heart was hard-fought for; it is inner quietness in the midst of action, relationships, and problems. Psalm 131 is about a learned composure. It is achieved, not automatic. It is conscious and chosen. It is self-mastery by the grace of God. We too can learn to compose and quiet our souls, and Psalm 131 shows us how. Sometimes the best way to understand something is to look at its exact opposite. The route to quiet composure becomes crystal clear if we turn this psalm upside down, taking the opposites of all its affirmations...

| Psalm 131 | “Upside Down” Psalm 131 |
|---|--|
| LORD, my heart is not proud; my eyes are not haughty. I don’t concern myself with great matters or with things too difficult for me to grasp. | O Self, my heart is proud (I’m self-absorbed), my eyes are haughty (I look down on others), and I chase after things too great and matters which are too difficult for me. |
| Instead, I have calmed and quieted my soul— like a weaned child who rests against his mother, my soul is like a weaned child within me. | So of course I’m noisy and restless inside— like a hungry infant fussing on his mother’s lap, I’m restless in my demands and worries. |
| O Israel, put your hope in the LORD— now and always. | You too can be like me— just continually scatter your hopes for happiness onto anything and everybody (except God). |

Israel was a confederation of twelve tribes who had a lot of distrust and tension between them. David had the job of leading that ugly, dysfunctional mess. The inner peace David reveals in Psalm 131:1 was not gained by rejecting life’s challenges, but by rejecting sinful pride and haughtiness. It would have been easy for David to show favoritism toward the tribes which were closest in kinship to him, and to under-value and mistreat the other tribes. But David refused those temptations.

Pride is not just about me (“I’m right.”); it’s also about you (“I’m right compared to you.”). That’s why David said both that he’s not proud (self-absorbed) and also that his eyes were not haughty; he didn’t look down on others. Pride is a deceptive thing. It doesn’t always look puffed-up; it doesn’t always brag. Pride looks deflated when it fails, when it is intimidated, when it despairs. That’s pride too. The proud, ambitious heart produces the “noise” of anxiety and irritation. The proud heart is fretful, self-preoccupied, easily offended, depressive, competitive. The proud heart pursues impossibilities (“things too great and too difficult”). Sometimes even small things can be “beyond us”—like trying to control other’s attitudes and choices, bending them to our desires. Noise in our souls is generated by trying to control things that God has not made us responsible for. But when we pursue what we’re called to, then we have composure. When we go after the right things (2 Timothy 2:22; Philippians 2:3-8), we find them to be within our God-given ability.

We gain composure through a weaning process. Something that once meant everything to us must come to mean nothing. A newborn demands milk. He doesn’t request it; he doesn’t ask if mom is busy or tired. Dying to our restless, fretful, irritable ways does not come easily. This is not a passive process. We cannot do this by ourselves. We’re not strong enough. And, we’re too strong. Our own cravings within us are too strong for us to master alone. We need Jesus; he can calm any storm. But we must supply some things: intelligent repentance, genuine faith, and specific obedience. We must think about God’s love, wisdom and power; we must remember God’s covenant relationship with us; we must remain patient and wait on God’s timing. An unweaned child demands immediate satisfaction. The adult versions of this demanding attitude results in anxiety, depression, anger, jealousy, discontentment, and confusion.

The first two verses of Psalm 131 are autobiographical. In this third and final verse, David issues an invitation and a command to us! First of all, note that God is in relationship with us. The fact that we belong to God is itself a cause for hope! Yahweh (literally, “I AM”) emphasizes God’s self-existence and his commitment to us. To “hope” means to desire good, to have some expectation of achieving it, and to focus one’s energies toward that good end. We desire and expect good from God, and we focus our energies toward experiencing the good that he calls us to. Our hope is in God’s sovereign, good, fatherly, wise care. We hope in God “now and always”. We fix our hope completely on him. We quiet the “noise machine” inside by laying aside the hopes that our proud self-will clings to and hoping in God’s goodness and generosity toward us. Psalm 131 calls us to engage in self-suspicion; inner agitation is a sure sign of pride and haughtiness. We need to take ourselves down a notch; take ourselves out of the center (where God belongs). When we yield that place to God, he blesses us with a peaceful, quiet heart.

Talking To Others About This Week’s Message

If a neighbor or friend at work asked you, “*What kind of stuff do they talk about at your church?*”, how would you summarize the most important elements of this week’s sermon and the key lessons you intend to apply to your life? Can you explain it in **plain language** anyone could understand?

Pride versus Humility Checklist
Nancy Leigh DeMoss

Instructions: For *each couplet*, mark the statement which better describes you.

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- Proud people focus on the failures of others.
 Humble people are overwhelmed with a sense of their own spiritual need.
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- Proud people have a critical, fault-finding spirit;
they look at everyone else's faults with a microscope but their own with a telescope.
 Humble people are compassionate;
they forgive much because they know how much they have been forgiven.
-
- Proud people are self-righteous; they look down on others.
 Humble people esteem all others better than themselves.
-
- Proud people have an independent, self-sufficient spirit.
 Humble people have a dependent spirit; they recognize their need for others.
-
- Proud people have to prove that they are right.
 Humble people are willing to yield the right to be right.
-
- Proud people claim rights; they have a demanding spirit.
 Humble people yield their rights; they have a meek spirit.
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- Proud people are self-protective of their time, their rights, and their reputation.
 Humble people are self-denying.
-
- Proud people desire to be served.
 Humble people are motivated to serve others.
-
- Proud people desire to be a success.
 Humble people are motivated to be faithful and to make others a success.
-
- Proud people desire self-advancement.
 Humble people desire to promote others.
-
- Proud people have a drive to be recognized and appreciated.
 Humble people have a sense of their own unworthiness;
they are thrilled that God would use them at all.
-
- Proud people are wounded when others are promoted and they are overlooked.
 Humble people are eager for others to get the credit; they rejoice when others are lifted up.
-
- Proud people have a subconscious feeling, "This ministry/church is privileged
to have me and my gifts"; they think of what they can do for God.
 Humble people's heart attitude is, "I don't deserve to have a part in any ministry"; they know
that they have nothing to offer God except the life of Jesus flowing through their broken lives.
-
- Proud people feel confident in how much they know.
 Humble people are humbled by how very much they have to learn.
-
- Proud people are self-conscious.
 Humble people are not concerned with self at all.

(continued...)

- Proud people keep others at arms' length.
- Humble people are willing to risk getting close to others and to take risks of loving intimately.

- Proud people are quick to blame others.
- Humble people accept personal responsibility and can see where they are wrong in a situation.

- Proud people are unapproachable or defensive when criticized.
- Humble people receive criticism with a humble, open spirit.

- Proud people are concerned with being respectable, with what others think; they work to protect their own image and reputation.
- Humble people are concerned with being real; what matters to them is not what others think but what God knows; they are willing to die to their own reputation.

- Proud people find it difficult to share their spiritual need with others.
- Humble people are willing to be open and transparent with others as God directs.

- Proud people want to be sure that no one finds out when they have sinned; their instinct is to cover up.
- Humble people, once broken, don't care who knows or who finds out; they are willing to be exposed because they have nothing to lose.

- Proud people have a hard time saying, "I was wrong; will you please forgive me?"
- Humble people are quick to admit failure and to seek forgiveness when necessary.

- Proud people tend to deal in generalities when confessing sin.
- Humble people are able to acknowledge specifics when confessing their sin.

- Proud people are concerned about the consequences of their sin.
- Humble people are grieved over the cause, the root of their sin.

- Proud people are remorseful over their sin, sorry that they got found out or caught.
- Humble people are truly, genuinely repentant over their sin, evidenced in the fact that they forsake that sin.

- Proud people wait for the other to come and ask forgiveness when there is a misunderstanding or conflict in a relationship.
- Humble people take the initiative to be reconciled when there is misunderstanding or conflict in relationships; they race to the cross; they see if they can get there first, no matter how wrong the other may have been.

- Proud people compare themselves with others and feel worthy of honor.
- Humble people compare themselves to the holiness of God and feel a desperate need for His mercy.

- Proud people are blind to their true heart condition.
- Humble people walk in the light.

- Proud people don't think they have anything to repent of.
- Humble people realize they have need of a continual heart attitude of repentance.

- Proud people don't think they need revival, but they are sure that everyone else does.
- Humble people continually sense their need for a fresh encounter with God and for a fresh filling of His Spirit.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

"Five Question Bible Study" (see page below) is a simple way to study any passage. We can use it to learn how to experience inner peace amid world turmoil...

Monday—Take the "Pride versus Humility Checklist". What do you learn?

Tuesday—Ask a friend to assess you with the checklist. What do you learn?

Wednesday—Read Psalm 131. List your areas of pride and/or haughtiness.

Thursday—Read Psalm 131. List the "great/difficult" matters you engage with.

Friday—Read Psalm 131. Renounce misplaced hopes; hope in Yahweh alone.

Saturday—***In preparation for worshipping your risen Lord tomorrow with your church family, read Psalm 73.***

Bible Text: _____

Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) is it found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text?